

WAGO 2025 ANNUAL MEETING

ORAL ABSTRACT



Coping with cancer: a trilingual graphic medicine approach to women's oncology

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Objectives

Graphic medicine merges healthcare with visual storytelling and can be used to disseminate patient educational material. This comic format may be particularly useful in patient audiences facing low medical literacy rates and/or language barriers. Our project investigates the potential utility of a graphic intervention as a therapeutic and teaching tool for gynecologic oncology patients.

Methods

Focus groups conducted with a gynecologic oncology support group indicated a need for a comic on coping strategies featuring a relatable character. We created a narrative about a woman with a new cancer diagnosis, which was also translated into Spanish and Vietnamese. The comic and a survey were distributed to patients at both community and academic gynecologic oncology clinics within the New Orleans metro area. Statistical analysis was performed.

Results

Survey respondents included 82 patients with either an established or new gynecologic cancer diagnosis. Mean age was 62 years old; 57.3% were white, 36.6% were Black, and 7.3% were of Latino or Hispanic ethnicity. The majority had endometrial carcinoma (51.9%) followed by ovarian/tubal carcinoma (26.6%). Most patients related to the main character (86.7%) and enjoyed reading the comic (84.0%). After reading the comic, 69.9% experienced a greater sense of direction and empowerment in dealing with their diagnosis, and over 50% reported decreased anxiety scores. Most patients gained knowledge from this educational comic: 94.6% were more aware of the importance of coping mechanisms; 91.7% planned to try a coping mechanism; and over 70% learned something useful, including advice on vetted resources.

Conclusions

Graphic medicine is a useful tool for disseminating medical information. We found that a key element in a successful medical comic is the relatability of a main character who can deliver educational material effectively. Participants found our comic relatable, empowering, stress-reducing, and informational. We plan to create future comics that follow the main character's cancer journey to address other oncology topics, such as chemotherapy and clinical trials.

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Abstract Table or Graph

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