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Effects of a Group Education and Skills Intervention on Neurocognitive Functioning in People Treated for Cancer

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Purpose: This project aimed to test the feasibility of a group psychological intervention that was designed to improve cognitive performance in people who have completed treatments for cancer. It was hypothesised that group cognitive rehabilitation would improve objective cognitive performance, subjective cognitive function and quality of life. Method: Eighteen adult cancer survivors who were at least 6 months post-treatment participated in a group cognitive behavioural intervention led by two psychologists. The manualised intervention, developed for this study, involved four 2-hour sessions and between session homework. Sessions involved education, skills training and skills practice on topics such as memory, attention, and fatigue. Participants completed neuropsychological assessments and self-report measures of subjective cognitive function, quality of life, and emotional distress at pre- and post-treatment. Results: Preliminary results showed that participants significantly improved in their total score on the Repeatable Battery for Assessment of Neuropsychological Status, despite completing an alternate form at post-test. Improvements at retest were much greater for intervention group participants than for a comparison group of community participants who had not had cancer and who did not attend cognitive rehabilitation. Participants were highly satisfied with the intervention. Conclusions: These results support further testing of the intervention. For the first time, we have demonstrated that cognitive rehabilitation strategies which have previously been reported in the published literature only as individual interventions in this population also have promise when delivered in a group format.