



Media Release

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Sexual health a key to patient wellbeing

Innovative framework for gynaecological cancer professionals

Adelaide: Health professionals should be better equipped to address the psychosexual needs of gynaecological cancer patients, according to research to be presented at an international cancer conference today (14/11).

Professor Patsy Yates, head of Queensland University of Technology's school of nursing, will discuss a ground-breaking framework for managing psychosexual care needs at the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia's (COSA's) Annual Scientific Meeting today.

"When people deal with a life-threatening illness, it can be easy for health professionals and the patient to overlook the importance of psychosexual health," Professor Yates said. "This is particularly important in gynaecological cancer treatment and care.

"Our framework aims to assist healthcare professionals to evaluate their patients' psychosexual care needs and providing appropriate support. It also encourages healthcare professionals to gain a better understanding of how psychosexual health can affect a patient's overall wellbeing."

Professor Yates said attitudes on psychosexual care varied among health professionals and patients, so it was important to provide education and support in a range of formats.

"One thing is clear," she said. "Patients with gynaecological cancer can experience adverse effects if their psychosexual care needs are ignored. So the training and support modules include learning materials in print, video and online formats, based on the authentic experiences of women living with gynaecological cancer.

"Ultimately, we are doing more than treating a disease – we are caring for an individual. Psychosexual support is an important part of an individual care plan and, with our modules, we are trying to give professionals the confidence to do more in that area."

COSA President, Associate Professor Sandro Porceddu, said physicians were largely focused on treatment and disease management, and this meant issues like psychosexual care could sometimes be neglected.

"This is an important facet of patient care and the new framework will assist practitioners to more readily recognise psychosexual issues and gain competency in supporting their patients' needs."

The framework is funded by Cancer Australia, the Federal Government's cancer control agency.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Glen Turner on 0412 443 212 or glen.turner@cancer.org.au

Rosannah Snelson on 0439 428 004 or rosannah.snelson@cancer.org.au