



Developing and Implementing a Virtual, Community-Based Program for Adults Affected by Cancer

Cosette Carter*, Ramya Krishna*, Cam Nguyen*, Leighann Warholak*, Lexy Zelczak*, Jennifer White CScD, MOT, OTR/L

University of Pittsburgh, Department of Occupational Therapy

*Doctor of Occupational Therapy Student



Background & Significance

- >16.9 million Americans are living with a history of cancer¹
- In Allegheny County, cancer is the second leading cause of death²
- Gaps in cancer care: current healthcare is not addressing performance issues and functional skills for cancer survivors to fully participate in daily routines and roles³

Cancer Caring Center:

- Pittsburgh community-based non-profit that provides free supportive services throughout the cancer care continuum
- Staff members reported a need for effective ways to collect data, conduct marketing, utilize technology, and support sustainability



Opportunity for Occupational Therapy in a Community-Based Program:

- Occupation-focused self-management programs are feasible to implement while positively impacting occupational performance, activity level, and quality of life for cancer survivors.^{3,4}

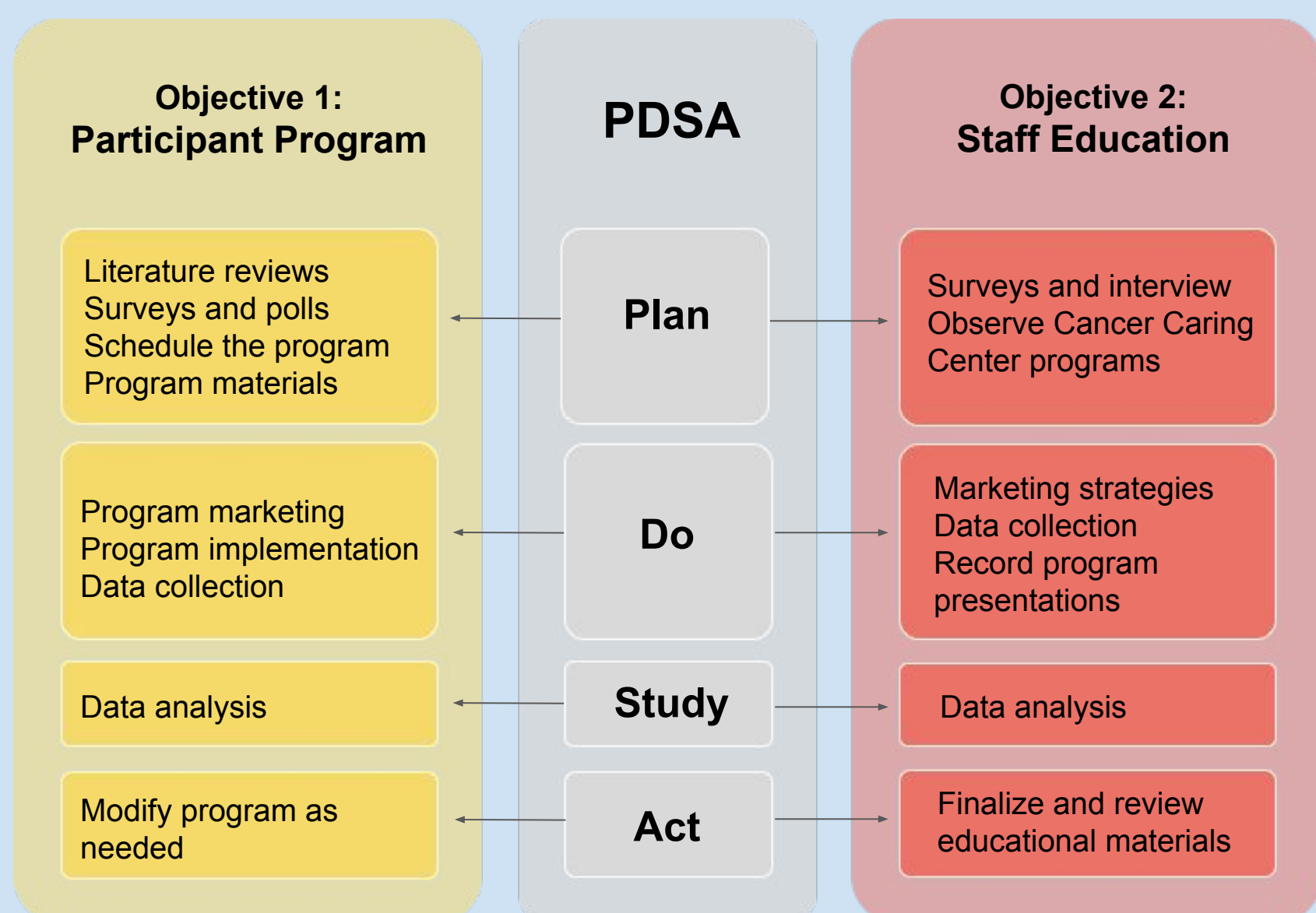
Program Objective 1:

- Design and implement the Live Life to the Fullest program for members at the Cancer Caring Center to increase satisfaction and performance in meaningful activities

Program Objective 2:

- Develop data collection and marketing strategies for the staff at the Cancer Caring Center to aid in the sustainability of current and future programs, address member recruitment needs, and increase funding opportunities

Methods



Live Life to the Fullest Program

- Week 1:** Skills to Improve Movement for Health and Wellness
- Week 2:** Mental Health Strategies
- Week 3:** Improving Communication and Advocacy for Health Needs
- Week 4:** Participating in Hobbies, Leisures, and Meaningful Activities
- Week 5:** Adjusting the Home Environment for Safety and Independence
- Week 6:** Caregiver Education

Session Format:

- Education
- Strategy training
- Goal setting



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Results

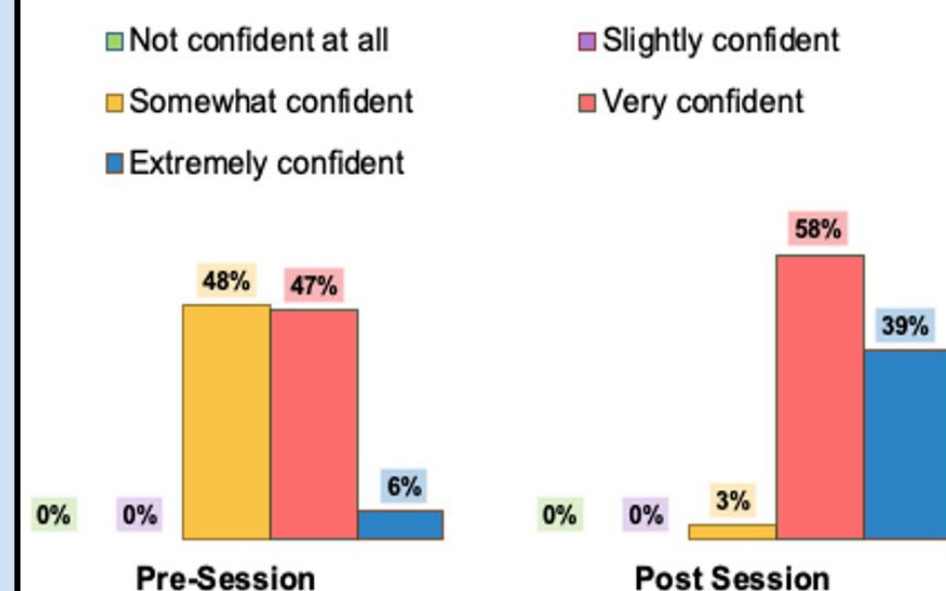
Participant Meaningful Quotes:

- "I am meeting many of my goals and felt very **accomplished** this week"
- "If I live life to the fullest, I appreciate to **have life!**"
- "Because of these goals - journaling, meditation, staying healthy, being active I continue to **move on with my own goals!**"
- "With these sessions, even though I can't do what I used to be able to, I still try to do some things. **These activities are so helpful!**"

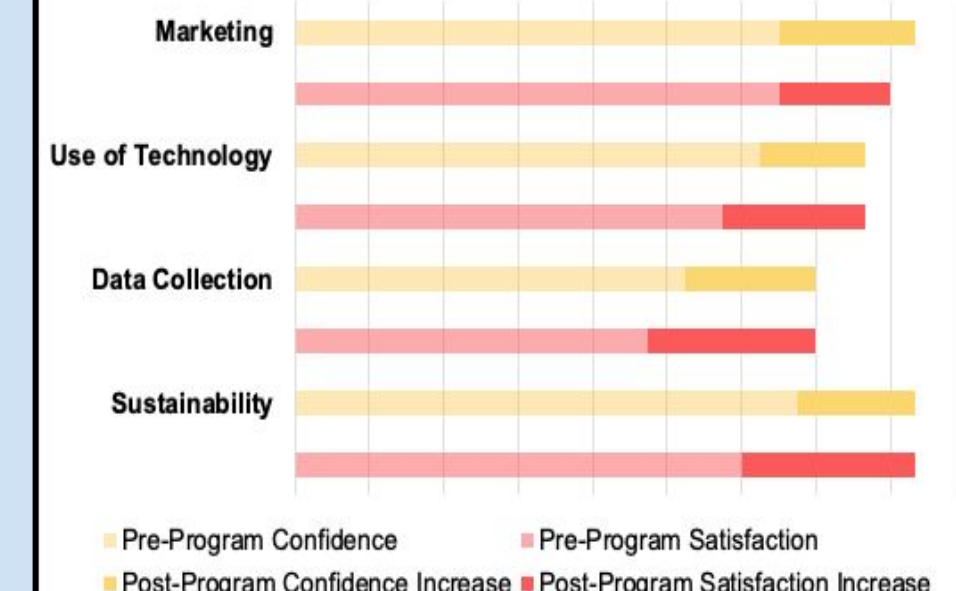
Staff Meaningful Quotes:

- "You are bringing **OT to life!**"
- "You found a way to **deliver your skills ...especially in working with Zoom.**"
- "You're not only on the mark but you're **blowing it away!**"
- "You **hit the nail on the head** with every single slide and all the information"
- "Very **effective marketing skills** – we were on TV this a.m. as a result!"

Participant Increase in Confidence of Program Topics



Staff Increase in Confidence and Satisfaction (Scale 1-10)



Discussion

General Trends:

- Participant comfort increased throughout the program with **vulnerable, open discussions** to learn from each other's experiences and strategies
- Participants reported highest improvement of performance and satisfaction in **care for others, health management, and high-demand recreational activities**
- **Virtual setting** improved **accessibility** of program (marketing and materials)
 - WPXI Pittsburgh-Now Interview
 - Dissemination of program materials

Successful Strategies:

- Text/call correspondence
- Newspaper & television marketing
- Reoccurring Zoom links
- Supplemental documents

Challenges:

- Communication in virtual setting
- Participant usability of Zoom
- Lost to follow up
- Compliance of virtual survey

Conclusions:

- Development and implementation of a virtual, self-management program is achievable in a community-based setting
- Occupational therapy is an appropriate skilled service to bridge the gaps in cancer care
- Both top-down and guided discovery approaches are successful to improve outcomes

Sustainability:

- A resource binder and program session recordings were created for:
 - Staff to improve and sustain current and future Cancer Caring Center programs
 - Future peer-networks to re-implement the Live Life to the Fullest program

Implications for Future Practice

- As **change agents**, occupational therapists can **establish their role** in novel settings, adapt to the current context of a pandemic, and enable **maximum functional performance** in community-dwelling adults affected by cancer
- Findings suggest an occupation-based self-management program **improves performance and satisfaction with daily activities** in adults affected by cancer
- Future studies to assess **long-term effectiveness** and **application of learned strategies**

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Corresponding authors: cmc177@pitt.edu, rak171@pitt.edu, can64@pitt.edu, lew95@pitt.edu, alz57@pitt.edu