Background & Significance

- >16.9 million Americans are living with a history of cancer.
- In Allegheny County, cancer is the second leading cause of death.
- Pace in cancer care is not addressing performance issues and functional skills for cancer survivors to fully participate in daily routines and roles.

Cancer Caring Center:
- Pittsburgh community-based non-profit that provides free supportive services throughout the cancer care continuum.
- Staff members needed 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.

Program Objective 1:
- Design and implement the Live Life to the Fullest program for members at the Cancer Caring Center to increase satisfaction and program participation 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

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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

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!"

Discussion

General Trends:
- Participant comfort increased throughout the program with vulnerable, open discussions to learn from each other's experiences.
- 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

Challenges:
- Communication in virtual setting
- Participant usability of Zoom
- Lost to follow up

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:
  - Staff to improve and sustain current and future Cancer Caring Center programs
  - Future peer-to-peer networking 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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References

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