

Online communities for breast cancer survivors

Resources to decrease the burden of survivorship and foster health and well-being

a scoping review

results from 15 studies



A lot of positive outcomes

Online communities are used to share and obtain emotional, informational, appraisal and instrumental social support. The most frequent kind of support reported is **informational support** :

- General information needs, problem solving strategies, weight, diet, exercise
- Cancer diagnosis, termination transition symptoms, problems during treatment, side effects of treatment and information about survival improvements

To reassure | Online communities represent a positive opportunity to remove fears and concerns among survivors, by allowing peers and others who know them to improve survivors' sense of support and to decrease stress (e.g. get motivation by sharing stories, finding peers going through the same situations, encouraging messages, etc.).

To empower | Online communities allow to mobilize resources for decreasing the uncertainty and stress of survivorship and gain the capacity to care for themselves (e.g. healthcare information, safe place with no judgement, economic support for healthcare, etc.).

To promote equity, diversity and inclusion | Having culturally tailored information and adequate recommendations that fit with their lifestyles is crucial (e.g. language and cultural barriers).

The drawbacks of online support

Online communities provide not only benefits but also risks for breast cancer survivors to consider, as they can negatively affect their welfare and increase stress during the post-treatment (e.g. risk of misinformation, negative feelings that could generate emotional burdens, etc.).

To keep in mind

Online communities are a source of **informational** and **emotional resources** that empower breast cancer survivors to take care of themselves and to openly communicate about the burdens of survivorship.

There is a gap in **cultural / ethnic representation** in this field that shows that institutional and organizational efforts are needed to **support instrumental and economic access** and to **decrease digital disparities**.

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