

# Satisfaction With Telehealth for Cancer Support Groups in Rural American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

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A descriptive study was conducted to determine the information needs of American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) cancer survivors and assess satisfaction with and acceptability of telehealth support group services for cancer survivors in AI and AN rural communities. AI and AN cancer survivors were asked to complete the Telehealth Satisfaction Survey and two open-ended questions, one regarding information needs and one seeking comments and suggestions about cancer support group meetings. Thirty-two surveys were returned. Information about nutrition during treatment and treatment-related side effects were the most sought after topics. Participants valued the opportunity to interact with other AI and AN cancer survivors who also lived in remote locations and the usefulness of the information presented. The link with geographically distant survivors was valuable to participants as they felt they were no longer alone in their cancer experiences. Determining survivors' information needs provides meaningful topics for future support group education. Telehealth is a viable way to facilitate cancer support groups to AI and AN cancer survivors in rural communities.

**S**upport groups for people with cancer are a well-documented, evidence-based intervention for dealing with the psychological effects of a cancer diagnosis and treatment and for providing information for follow-up care (Andersen, 2002; Classen et al., 2001; Dolbeault et al., 2009; Fobair et al., 2002; Gottlieb & Wachala, 2007). Support group participants report gaining a sense of community and unconditional acceptance in addition to receiving information about their cancer, treatment, and self-care (Ussher, Kirsten, Butow, & Sandoval, 2006). However, support groups for people with cancer often are not available in rural areas, particularly in rural American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) communities (U.S. Department of Health and Social Services, 2006). The purpose of this program evaluation is to determine the information needs of AI and AN cancer survivors

## At a Glance

- ◆ Support groups delivered by videoconferencing bridge geographical distances and increase access to support groups in rural communities.
- ◆ Assessing information needs of participants is essential in providing a culturally congruent support group.
- ◆ Rural American Indian and Alaska Native women with cancer express satisfaction with support groups delivered by videoconference.

living in rural communities and to explore these survivors' satisfaction with telehealth facilitation of support group meetings.

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