

Framework for the development of an interactive training module for health professionals to address the psychosexual care of women affected by gynaecological cancers

Background to the Framework:

Treatment for a gynaecological cancer can alter a woman's behaviours, attitudes and feelings towards sexuality and intimacy. Women with a gynaecological cancer can sometimes experience:

- changes to body image or how a woman sees herself and how she thinks others see her;
- loss of femininity as a result of treatment;
- feeling a loss of wholeness;
- isolation from others;
- fear of rejection from their partner; and
- guilt or a fear that sexual activity will result in pain or will cause the cancer to reappear.

Women experiencing these concerns come into contact with a range of health professionals in a variety of settings. These health professionals require knowledge and skills to minimise the risk of these concerns, and to effectively treat them should they occur.

The Framework for Psychosexual Care of Women with Gynaecological Cancers has been developed to describe the knowledge, skills and abilities required of health professionals working with women at risk of, or who are experiencing psychosexual concerns associated with gynaecological cancer or its treatments.

Framework Explanation:

The framework is centred around the needs of experiences of women with gynaecological cancers. It incorporates three tiers, adapted from the tiered model of psychosocial care described by Hutchison, Steginga and Dunn (2005). Each tier represents different levels of need that are based on the complexity or severity of the psychosexual concerns experienced by women affected by gynaecological cancers and their partners. Within each tier, the associated health services and interventions that may be required to address these needs and concerns, and the capabilities required of health professionals to address these needs are also described.

The three levels described by Hutchison et al (2005), that are applied in this framework include:

Universal: The Universal tier is the broadest level of care relevant for all women affected by gynaecological cancers. The modules and supporting resources included at the Universal Care tier are appropriate for all health professionals *who interact* with women affected by gynaecological cancers.

Extended: Topics and resources discussed in the Extended Care tier are designed to aid health professionals care for women with mild to moderate psychosexual effects from gynaecological cancers. The resources supplied at this tier are appropriate for health professionals *who are involved with the treatment and care* of women affected by gynaecological cancers.

Specialist Care: The Specialist Care tier will discuss topics which will aid health professionals' care for women with gynaecological cancer who are exhibiting severe distress. Due to the highly specialised and often sensitive nature of required care at this level, identification of cases and appropriate referral techniques are required, as well as strategies to resolve problems.

The framework is designed as a step model, where higher tiers building on capabilities and services in lower levels. For example, to adequately provide care at the Extended level, it is expected that health professionals have achieved the capabilities outlined in the Universal level.

Use of the Framework:

The framework will be used to guide the development of an interactive training resource for health professionals that enable health professionals to achieve the capabilities of the various levels. The training resource will comprise of an evidence-based module and supporting resources on the care of women affected by gynaecological cancers.

Professional development model for health professionals (Figure 1)

This diagram is supported by the components outlined in the following table: Levels of Intervention and Care.

The Framework describes the knowledge, skills and abilities required of health professionals.



Framework adapted from Hutchison, Steginga and Dunn (2005)

Levels of Intervention and Care

Level of Intervention	Methods	Services	Capabilities	Learning Modules relevant to this level
Universal Care <i>For all women affected by gynaecological cancers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of general information about treatment or common problems Acknowledgement of women's social and emotional experience of psychosexual effects of gynaecological cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary care team Cancer specialists in non-gynaecological settings Cancer information services Print, electronic audiovisual resources for consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how various biological, psychological, social and cultural factors can influence how a person perceives and experiences sexuality Identify the common psychosexual effects of diagnosis and treatment for gynaecological cancer Describe the social and emotional experience of psychosexual changes associated with gynaecological cancers for women and their partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify factors affecting sexual adjustment in women with gynaecological cancers and their partners Communicate effectively with women and their partners about the experience of psychosexual effects of gynaecological cancers Identify and appropriately refer women and their partners to services that address the psychosexual effects associated with gynaecological cancers 	Modules 1,2 and 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding sexuality Understanding the experience of the Psychosexual Effects of Gynaecological Cancer for women and their partners Enquiring and responding to the psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers
Extended Care <i>For women with mild to moderate effects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psycho-education combined with emotional support for mild distress Peer support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist cancer services (gynaecological cancer centres) Specialist Women's Health Services Peer Support Culture specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the psychosexual effects of gynaecological cancers on women and their partners Develop and implement generic and targeted evidence based psycho-educational programs for women experiencing mild – moderate psychosexual effects from gynaecological cancers and their partners Develop women's self management abilities in responding to the psychosexual sequelae of 	Modules 1 - 6: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding sexuality Understanding the experience of the Psychosexual Effects of Gynaecological Cancer for women and their partners Enquiring and responding to the psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers

		services	<p>gynaecological cancers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate advanced skills in communicating with women and their partners about specific psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers • Identify and appropriately refer women to services that address specific psychosexual effects associated with gynaecological cancers where required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding psychosexual sequelae: Pathophysiological, Psychosocial, and Cultural Aspects • Undertaking a comprehensive sexual health assessment • Evidence based approaches to treatment of psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers
<p>Specialist care</p> <p>For women with moderate to severe distress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual/couple therapy with specialist sexual health counsellor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist sexual health counsellors • Specialist gynaecological cancer centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a comprehensive assessment of specific psychosexual problems experienced by women with gynaecological cancers • Implement evidence based counselling for women experiencing moderate to severe psychosexual effects from gynaecological cancers • Develop women's self management abilities in responding to moderate to severe psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers • Demonstrate advanced skills in counselling with women and their partners about specific psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers • Identify and appropriately refer women to services that address specific psychosexual effects associated with gynaecological cancers where required 	<p>Modules 1 - 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding sexuality • Understanding the experience of the Psychosexual Effects of Gynaecological Cancer for women and their partners • Enquiring and responding to the psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers • Understanding psychosexual sequelae: Patho physiological, Psychosocial, and Cultural Aspects • Undertaking a comprehensive sexual health assessment • Evidence based approaches to treatment of psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers • Additional specialised training