Young Women's Cancer Mental Health Hub

bravespace powered by SO BRAVE

Introduction

In February 2024, in collaboration with Cancer Chicks, So Brave surveyed our young women's cancer communities to ascertain what the unmet supportive care needs were. Overwhelmingly the survey provided feedback that **mental health and psycho-social gaps in survivorship** remained key issues for most respondents.

To address these unmet needs, So Brave has developed an online Mental Health Hub for young women's cancer to meet these supportive care needs.

bravespace is a digital mental health hub designed to address the unique psycho-social needs of young women diagnosed with cancer. **brave**space aims to centralise access to evidence-based, reliable, and relevant mental health resources, including educational articles, videos, downloadable tools, peer narratives, and links to professional support services. Its overarching vision is to ensure that every young woman affected by cancer can easily access resources that foster emotional wellbeing, understanding, and empowerment throughout her cancer journey.

By reducing information fatigue and improving accessibility, **brave**space seeks to enhance mental health literacy, promote resilience, and reduce isolation through the integration of peer-to-peer storytelling and practical, compassionate content.

Every year more than 4,000 young Australian women aged 18-40 are diagnosed with cancer.*

*AIHW. (2025, October 8). Cancer data in Australia 2025

Cancer incidence rates in younger populations are on the rise.*

*Cancer Australia. (2022, August 8). Cancer Incidence.

Purpose

- This project aims to provide national leadership in improving the mental health and survivorship experience of young women affected by cancer.
- Mitigates challenges faced by young women accessing timely, appropriate mental health and peer support services (particularly those in regional areas).
- Aligns with the Australia Cancer Plan's Strategic Objectives 2 (Enhanced Consumer Experience) and 3 (World-Class Health Systems for Optimal Care), addressing identified equity gaps in psycho-social patient-centered, and supportive care for young people.

Methodology

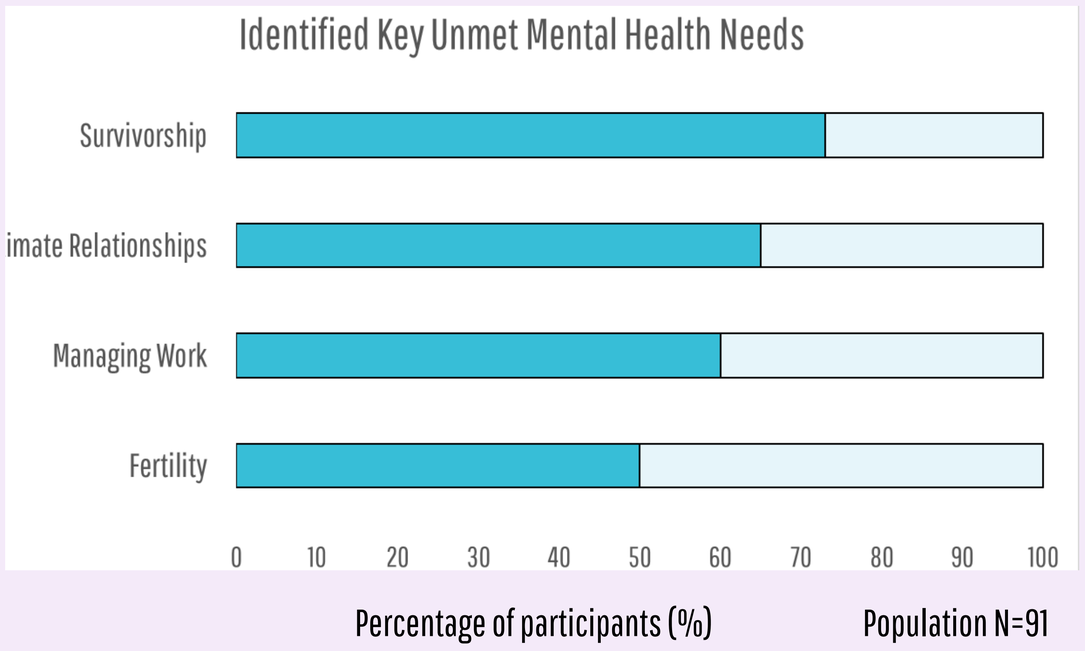
1. Survey of young women to determine what supportive care gaps exist for young breast cancer patients: overwhelmingly mental health identified as a key unmet need.
2. Co-designed through a participatory process led by a lived-experience project steering group and a psycho-oncology professional steering committee.
3. Regular consultation sessions were conducted throughout the development and testing phases to ensure the platform's design, usability, and content reflect patient needs and preferences.
4. Input from metal health professionals ensured accuracy, clinical integrity, and adherence to evidence-based practice.
5. Content available in multiple formats to accommodate diverse learning styles and accessibility needs.
6. Evaluation will include analysis of user engagement and qualitative feedback to assess the impact on emotional well-being, connection, and quality of life for young women navigating cancer and survivorship.

Pathway to better mental health

Diagnosis and Referral → Navigation and Engagement → Connection and Support → Improve Mental Health

Key Survey Findings

In collaboration with Cancer Chicks, in February 2024, we surveyed our young women's cancer communities to ascertain the gaps in supportive care. 91 young women diagnosed with cancer before the age of 40 responded to the survey and identified significant gaps in psycho-social support during and after treatment:



Young women's preferences to accessing information:

- >65% participants expressed a strong preference for accessing information and connection through online platforms and informal in-person gatherings.

80% of respondents indicated interest in contributing to a steering group to co-design future resources and activities, reflecting strong consumer motivation to shape mental health and survivorship support for young women with cancer.

Key psychological concerns for young women include:
-Shock and distress at the untimeliness of the disease
-Guilt about the impact on partners and children
-A sense of being a different person with different priorities*

*Cancer Australia. (2024, October 2). Living with breast cancer: The impact of a breast cancer diagnosis on younger women.

Patient Identified Support Gaps As Targets

Through the engagement of our patient advisory committee, we identified several key mental health and psycho-social support gaps that **brave**space targets with information, and resources. These include:

Stress from managing multiple roles.
Connection, loneliness and isolation.
Mental Health access and structure in healthcare
Life after cancer/survivorship
Fear of recurrence
Sexual health, fertility, menopause, intimate relationships and body image.
Cognitive impacts of treatment.
Courageous conversations - newly diagnosed through to end of life.
Wellbeing and mindfulness and other practice supports.

Next steps

- Parliament House Launch - 25 November
- Promotion to cancer care clinics and mental health professionals across Australia
- Ongoing patient content submission and promotion
- Deliver in-person support opportunities
- Evaluation of site effectiveness

For More Information And Live bravespace Notifications:

Acknowledgements

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