

Feasibility and Preliminary Effectiveness of CALM in Immunotherapy Responders

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Background

- Up to 25% of metastatic patients report depression and demoralization.
- Managing Cancer and Living Meaningfully (CALM) is an evidence based treatment for psychological distress in these patients.¹
- Immunotherapy patients may live for a long time with a life-threatening illness, which may cause emotional problems.

Purpose

To assess the feasibility and acceptability of CALM in patients with stage IV melanoma lung carcinoma with a positive response on immunotherapy after 3 months.

“How can I cope with the bizarre, weird, difficult, and also beautiful experience of getting a longer time to live as a result of immunotherapy?”

- Immunotherapy responder

Methods

Study design:

- One armed, treatment only feasibility pilot study with a mixed method design.
- Feasibility: % of patients who consent to participate, and complete ≥3 sessions and questionnaires.
- Quantitative patient reported outcomes: depressive symptoms with Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and death anxiety with Death and Dying Distress Scale (DADDS).
- Qualitative interviews.

Study procedures:

- Patients were offered to participate in the trial regardless of their levels of distress.
- CALM therapy was provided by trained therapist.

Preliminary results

Feasibility:

- 40 patients were approached, 19 included, 21 refused (feeling well, no need to talk, not willing to invest time)
- 100% of the patients completed baseline questionnaires
- 1 dropout

Background characteristics	N
Age (yrs), M(SD)	56 (9,3)
Gender (f/m)	11/8
Melanoma st IV	11
Lung carcinoma st IV	8

Quantitative patient reported outcomes (N):

	PHQ-9 (0-27)					DADDS (0-75)		
	Low (0-5)	Mild (6-10)	Moderate (11-15)	Moderate-severe (16-20)	Severe (21-27)	Low (0-19)	Moderate (20-50)	High (51-75)
Baseline (N=19)	11	6	1	0	1	11	8	0
3 months (N=13)	8	2	3	0	0	7	6	0

Managing Cancer and Living Meaningfully (CALM)

CALM is a brief (3-6 sessions), supportive-expressive individual psychotherapy, specifically designed to address distress for patients with advanced cancer. It provides space to reflect on the practical and profound implications of cancer on the following four interrelated domains:

“It is very helpful to be able to talk about everything, my fears, my worries, without feeling a burden. Especially since people around me think I’m healed, while I’m not so sure about that.”

- Immunotherapy responder

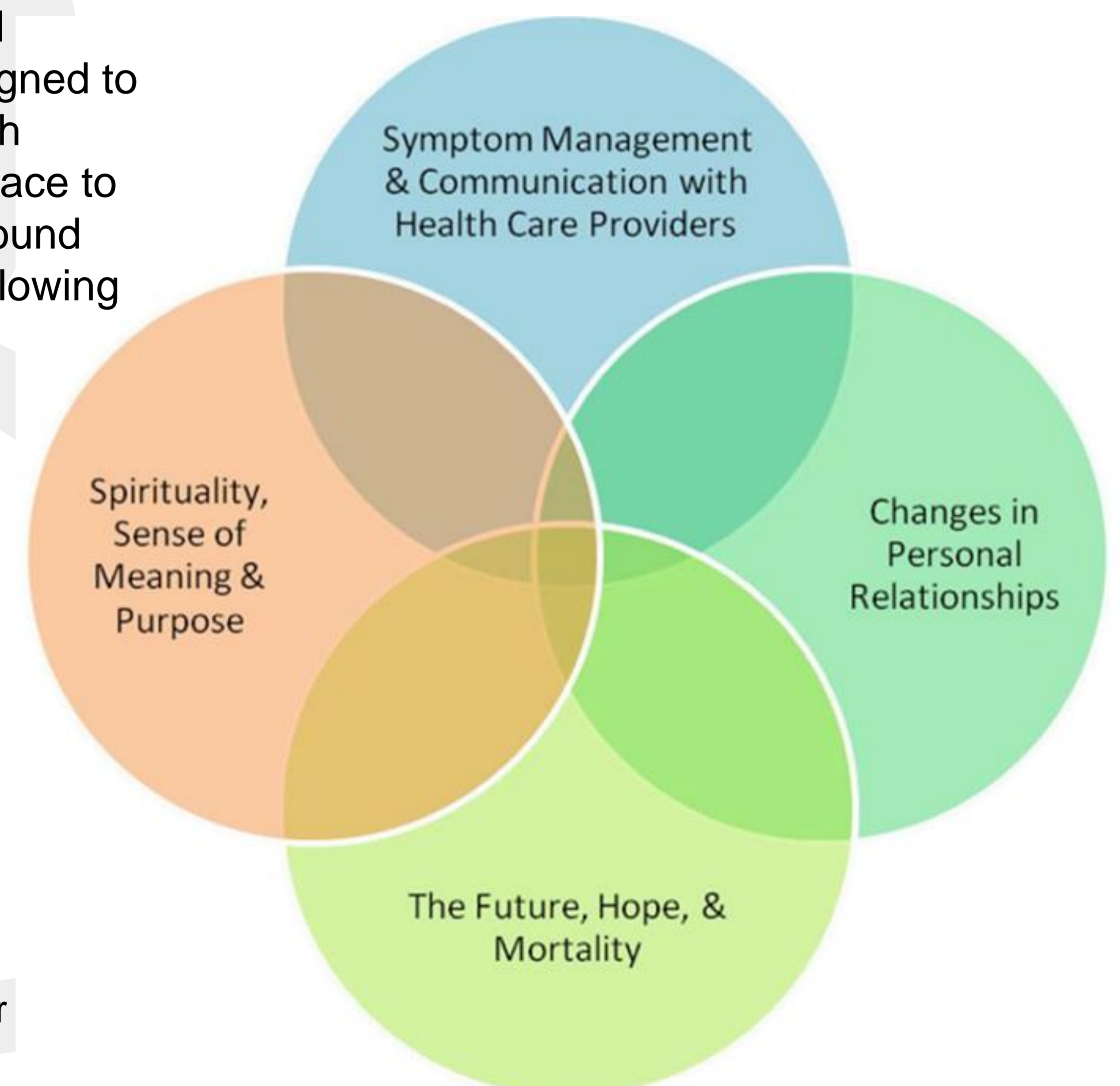


Fig. 1. CALM domains

Conclusion

- Half of the patients with response to immunotherapy are willing to engage in CALM therapy.
- They show mild distress at baseline, which remained in the same range at 3 months follow-up. Qualitative interviews will be used to determine if and what aspects of CALM therapy have been helpful for this patient group.

1. Rodin, G., C. Lo, A. Rydall, J. Shnall, C. Malfitano, A. Chiu, T. Panday, S. Watt, E. An, R. Nissim, M. Li, C. Zimmermann and S. Hales (2018). "Managing Cancer and Living Meaningfully (CALM): A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Psychological Intervention for Patients With Advanced Cancer." *J Clin Oncol* 36(23): 2422-2432.