

Exploring young women's needs in breast cancer peer support and Metaverse-based programs

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INTRODUCTION

Young women with breast cancer have unique psychosocial needs that can be addressed through peer support groups. The Metaverse, a virtual social platform, offers a potentially effective way of delivering peer support to this population.

OBJECTIVE

This qualitative study aims to explore the experiences and preferences of young breast cancer survivors regarding peer support activities and needs for Metaverse-based peer support programs.

METHODS

We conducted three focus group interviews and three individual interviews with fifteen young women with breast cancer, five participants in each group. The interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. We analyzed the data using a conventional content analysis approach that prioritized ethical considerations such as participant confidentiality and anonymity.

RESULTS

Four key themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (1) the benefits of peer support activities, including information sharing, empathy-building, and behavior change; (2) the challenges of peer support activities, including inaccurate information, peer conflict, social isolation, and stigma; (3) preferences for peer support groups in terms of composition, size, and medium, with a particular emphasis on the need for operational guidelines; and (4) needs for Metaverse-based peer support programs, which included concerns about safety and enjoyment.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study suggest that peer support groups can provide important psychosocial support for young women with breast cancer. This study also highlights the potential of Metaverse as a suitable platform for delivering peer support programs. The study provides valuable insights for the development of effective Metaverse-based peer support programs that can meet the unique needs and preferences of young breast cancer survivors.

Table 1. Experiences of peer support activities and the need for a Metaverse-based program in young women with breast cancer

Categories	Subcategories
Advantages of peer support activities	Sharing diverse information in real-time
	Fostering empathy and comfort through communication
	Collaborating for a healthier future
Disadvantages of peer support activities	Confusion caused by flooding unverified information
	Friction and conflict due to differences in experience
	Feeling excluded even from peer support groups
	Feeling stigmatized and trapped as a patient
Preferences of peer support activities	Composing groups based on interests vs. diversity
	Scaling the group size large vs. small
	Engaging in online vs. offline activities
	Establishing operational guidelines for facilitating peer support activities
Need for Metaverse-based peer support programs	Providing a safe playground beyond physical limitations
	Addressing concerns about unfamiliarity with the platform
	Creating diverse content by leveraging the unique nature of the Metaverse

