Perceived benefits of support groups for cancer victims and family members
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• **Introduction**
  - The literature reports about the extreme psychosocial strain of cancer victims and also of the strain for family members. Such support groups may therefore be an important contribution to cancer victims and their families.
  - Prospective, randomized studies as well as a few non-randomized studies of voluntary support groups of cancer victims and family members have reported that participation in a support group contributes to increased quality of life and coping ability, and that such benefits also continue after a follow-up period.

• **Research questions**
  - Since systematic evaluations of the benefits of support groups are underreported in the literature, the main aim was to study the effects of group participation on cancer victims and partners/family members
  - The following research questions were examined
    - Does the participation in a support group have any beneficial effects on cancer victims’ and family members’ health related quality of life (HRQOL) and on coping with stress?
    - Does the participation in a support group have persisting effects?

• **Findings**
  - Participation in support groups contributes to an increased quality of life and coping ability. Such benefits also continue and are present after a follow-up period of six months. The possibilities to give and receive social support from other participants attributed significant importance.
  - The number of individuals that get cancer or a cancer-related disease is increasing and the number of individuals living with cancer over a longer period of time is also increasing. On the other hand, the time a patient is in a hospital becomes shorter and shorter which means that the need for voluntary support groups of cancer victims and family members is increasing.
  - Thus, this only underlines the support groups as an important priority area for the future.