

"Look Good ... Feel Better" program: its importance and applicability to Japanese clinical settings

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Cancer treatments are often accompanied by drastic changes in patients' appearances. Complications such as hair-loss, changes in skin color, loss of body weight have a tremendous impact on body image and self esteem. Despite these impacts medical professionals focus their interest on treating the disease itself seldom giving comprehensive advice on body image issues in the clinical setting.

This research focused on the "Look Good ... Feel Better" program that has been catering to cancer patients' needs regarding body and self esteem issues for more than ten years in the USA. The "Look Good ...Feel Better" program is a free, national public service that helps women undergoing cancer treatment learn to cope with the appearance related side effects of treatment and regain a sense of self-confidence and control over their lives. The program was founded in 1989 through a partnership between the Cosmetic, Toiletry, Fragrance Association Foundation (CTFA) , American Cancer Society (ACS) and National Cosmetology Association (NCA) . The three partners support the program through the provision of funding, volunteer training, and supply of free educational materials and cosmetics.

In order to investigate the possibility of implementing this program in Japan, the author participated in a "patient session" and a "volunteer training session" workshops held by the "Look Good ...Feel Better" program in Los Angeles area in 2001. The author also conducted interviews with local American Cancer Society staff who were in charge of the program to get detailed information on how the project is structured and managed. As for activities in Japan, the author collected information on the groups/individuals that provide profit/non-profit activities that aim to increase people's quality of life using cosmetics. The information was obtained through the Internet homepages, an online database "Igaku-chuozaishi", newspapers and magazines.

This report describes the outline of the "Look Good ...Feel Better" program. It includes the breakdown of responsibility of the three partners who oversee the program, principles and content of the program, training processes for volunteers, and the author's impression on the "patient session" and "volunteer training session". The report also describes the current situation of the activities related to cosmetology in clinical settings in Japan. Lastly, the author discussed some points that are particularly relevant to implementing the program in Japan.