

New study finds storytelling can reduce depression for cancer patients

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A new study from UW-Madison has found storytelling can reduce depression and worry for cancer patients.

The Journal of Palliative Medicine recently published a study from lead author Meg Wise, an associate research scientist at UW-Madison's School of Pharmacy whose work is funded by the National Cancer Institute.

She and her colleagues found that when cancer patients are able to take part in a specially designed storytelling interview process, they experience greater peace and reduction in depression than patients who don't get that chance.

Wise's work began 15 years ago, when as a UW-Madison researcher she interviewed cancer patients nearing the end of their lives to ask how they were dealing with their diagnosis. Many asked her for a transcript of the interview, as they hadn't discussed these issues with loved ones.

"I would think, wait a minute," Wise says. "You've had stage 4 lung cancer for eight months, and this is the first time you've talked about it?"

About 10 years ago, Wise and her colleagues developed miLivingStory, a program incorporating elements of dignity therapy, which is often performed for those nearing death.

See more at WisBusiness.com.