



# Supportive Counseling to Enhance Self-Care and Psychological Adaptation in a Patient with Advanced Breast Cancer: A Case Report

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**Abstract:** Advanced breast cancer is frequently accompanied by complex physical limitations and psychological distress that challenge patients' ability to adapt and engage in self-care. These physical challenges frequently interact with emotional responses such as anxiety, uncertainty, and reduced confidence in managing daily life. Supportive counseling plays an important role in facilitating psychological adaptation and strengthening patients' capacity to participate in self-care despite these challenges actively. This case report aims to describe the application of supportive counseling to enhance self-care engagement and psychological adaptation in a patient with advanced breast cancer and bone metastasis. The case involved an adult female patient experiencing chronic pain, functional dependence, self-care limitations, and heightened anxiety related to her illness. Supportive counseling was delivered using a structured, patient-centered approach that emphasized emotional support, coping facilitation, self-care encouragement, and family involvement. Counseling sessions were integrated into daily clinical care and focused on empowering the patient to recognize remaining capabilities and adapt to physical limitations. The results demonstrated reduced anxiety, improved emotional adjustment, increased participation in self-care activities, and greater confidence in managing daily needs with minimal assistance. These findings highlight the importance of supportive counseling as a psychosocial approach to promote psychological adaptation and self-care in patients with advanced breast cancer, contributing to more holistic and patient-centered oncological care.

**KEYWORDS:** *Supportive counseling, self-care, psychological adaptation, advanced breast cancer, case report*

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## INTRODUCTION

Advanced breast cancer remains a major global health concern, particularly among women, due to its progressive nature and profound impact on physical functioning and psychological well-being. In advanced stages, the disease is often accompanied by complications such as bone metastasis, persistent pain, fatigue, and mobility impairment, which significantly disrupt daily functioning and autonomy (Aldbyani et al., 2025). Beyond physical symptoms, patients frequently experience psychological distress, including anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and difficulties in adjusting to long-term illness, all of which can compromise quality of life and self-care engagement (Patil, 2024).

Living with advanced cancer requires continuous psychological adaptation as patients face uncertainty, bodily changes, and increasing dependence on others. Psychological adaptation refers to the individual's capacity to cognitively and emotionally adjust to illness-related challenges while maintaining a sense of meaning, control, and self-worth (Sayed et al., 2024). Recent studies have shown that inadequate psychological adaptation in patients with advanced cancer is associated with increased anxiety, reduced self-efficacy, and decreased participation in self-care behaviors, which may further exacerbate physical decline and emotional distress (Anthonysamy Anbarasu, 2024).

Self-care plays a crucial role in helping patients with chronic and advanced illnesses maintain functional ability and psychological stability. However, in advanced breast cancer, self-care capacity is often compromised by pain, functional limitations, and emotional vulnerability (Tarrats-pons & Mussons-torras, 2025). Research over the past five years indicates that while medical and nursing interventions frequently focus on symptom management, psychological support aimed at strengthening patients' adaptive capacity and self-care engagement remains insufficiently integrated into routine oncological care (Tarrats-pons & Mussons-torras, 2025). This gap highlights the need for approaches that address not only physical symptoms but also the psychological processes underlying patients' ability to cope and remain actively involved in self-care.

Supportive counseling has emerged as an effective psychosocial intervention for individuals facing serious and life-altering illnesses. In the context of cancer care, supportive counseling emphasizes emotional validation, coping facilitation, reinforcement of remaining abilities, and encouragement of adaptive responses to illness-related stressors. Recent evidence suggests that supportive counseling can reduce anxiety, enhance psychological adjustment, and promote greater engagement in health-related behaviors among patients with chronic and advanced diseases (Greco et al., 2025). Despite these benefits, supportive counseling is still underreported in case-based literature involving patients with advanced breast cancer, particularly when linked explicitly to self-care and psychological adaptation outcomes.

Previous studies addressing supportive interventions in cancer populations have predominantly employed quantitative designs or focused on generalized psychosocial outcomes. Case reports that provide in-depth descriptions of how supportive counseling is applied in real clinical settings, especially for patients with complex conditions such as advanced breast cancer with bone metastasis, remain limited. Moreover, existing case reports often emphasize medical or nursing perspectives, with less attention to counseling-oriented frameworks that explore patients' psychological adaptation and self-care experiences holistically (Dou et al., 2025). This limitation indicates a need for counseling-oriented case reports that explicitly address psychological adaptation and self-care processes in advanced cancer contexts.

Given this gap, there is a need for case-based evidence that illustrates how supportive counseling can be integrated into daily clinical care to enhance psychological adaptation and self-care among patients with advanced breast cancer. Such reports are essential for translating counseling concepts into practical strategies that oncology health professionals can adopt. Therefore, this case report aims to describe the application of supportive counseling in a patient with advanced breast cancer, with particular emphasis on its role in enhancing self-care engagement and psychological adaptation. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of counseling-oriented literature by providing practical insights into patient-centered psychosocial support in complex oncological conditions.

## METHODS

### Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative case report design to illustrate the application of supportive counseling in enhancing self-care engagement and psychological adaptation in a patient

with advanced breast cancer. A case report approach was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of the patient's psychological experiences, adaptive processes, and responses to counseling-based support within a real clinical context. This design is considered appropriate for exploring complex psychosocial phenomena that cannot be fully captured by quantitative methods, particularly in patients with advanced, multifaceted health conditions (Reina Dhamanik, Imami Nur R et al., 2020).

### **Participants**

The participant was an adult female patient diagnosed with advanced breast cancer accompanied by bone metastasis who was receiving inpatient care at a tertiary healthcare facility. The patient experienced persistent pain, reduced mobility, limitations in self-care activities, and psychological distress characterized by anxiety and emotional vulnerability related to her illness. Inclusion criteria for this case report included a confirmed diagnosis of advanced breast cancer, the presence of self-care limitations, psychological distress requiring supportive intervention, and willingness to participate in counseling sessions. Written informed consent was obtained from the patient and her family prior to data collection and reporting. To ensure confidentiality, all personal identifiers were removed and replaced with anonymized information, in accordance with ethical standards for case-based research (Leite et al., 2020). Ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki were observed throughout the case reporting process.

### **Instruments**

Data were collected using a combination of clinical observation, structured interviews, and standardized assessment tools to support the counseling process. Functional independence in daily activities was assessed using the Barthel Index, which has been widely used to evaluate self-care capacity in patients with chronic and advanced illnesses. Psychological distress, particularly anxiety, was assessed using a validated anxiety screening instrument appropriate for clinical settings. These instruments were used to support clinical judgment and to monitor changes in self-care engagement and psychological adaptation throughout the counseling process. The use of combined qualitative and quantitative assessments is recommended to enhance the credibility of psychosocial case reports in healthcare contexts (Eriyani & Pebrianti, 2025).

### **Procedure**

Supportive counseling was integrated into the patient's daily clinical care during a three-day inpatient period. The counseling process was conducted through individual sessions delivered in a supportive and patient-centered manner. Each session focused on emotional expression, validation of the patient's experiences, facilitation of adaptive coping strategies, and reinforcement of the patient's remaining self-care abilities. Family members were involved as appropriate to strengthen emotional support and continuity of care. Counseling interventions emphasized helping the patient recognize realistic goals, adjust expectations related to physical limitations, and actively participate in self-care activities within her capacity. Ethical principles, including voluntary participation, respect for autonomy, and psychological safety, were maintained throughout the counseling process (Soikkeli-jalonen et al., 2025).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed a descriptive and reflective approach consistent with qualitative case report methodology. Observational notes, interview summaries, and assessment results were reviewed to identify changes in psychological adaptation and self-care engagement over the counseling period. The analysis focused on comparing the patient's psychological state and self-care participation before and after the supportive counseling intervention. Rather than statistical testing, findings were interpreted through thematic reflection and clinical reasoning to capture meaningful changes in emotional adjustment, coping responses, and self-care behaviors. This analytic approach is recommended for case reports aimed at generating practical insights into counseling interventions within complex clinical settings (Editors, 2025).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The patient in this case was an adult woman diagnosed with advanced breast cancer with bone metastasis who required inpatient care due to persistent pain and decreased functional capacity. Initial assessment indicated partial dependence in daily self-care activities and the presence of psychological distress, including anxiety related to disease progression and physical limitations.

An overview of the patient's characteristics and the focus of the supportive counseling intervention is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Patient Characteristics and Supportive Counseling Focus

| Aspect                  | Description                                                                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sex                     | Female                                                                                   |
| Diagnosis               | Advanced breast cancer with bone metastasis                                              |
| Care setting            | Inpatient care                                                                           |
| Duration of care        | 3 days                                                                                   |
| Main physical concerns  | Chronic pain, limited mobility                                                           |
| Psychological condition | Anxiety, emotional distress                                                              |
| Self-care status        | Partial dependence in daily activities                                                   |
| Counseling approach     | Supportive counseling                                                                    |
| Focus of counseling     | Emotional support, coping facilitation, enhancement of self-care engagement              |
| Observed outcomes       | Reduced anxiety, improved psychological adaptation, increased participation in self-care |

The patient in this case was an adult woman diagnosed with advanced breast cancer with bone metastasis who required inpatient care due to persistent pain and decreased functional capacity. Initial assessment revealed partial dependence in performing activities of daily living, particularly mobility and personal hygiene. Psychological screening identified mild to moderate anxiety associated with disease progression, physical limitations, and uncertainty regarding future outcomes. These findings are consistent with recent studies indicating that patients with advanced cancer frequently experience concurrent physical impairment and psychological distress that negatively affect daily functioning and emotional well-being ([Rizkasari et al., 2025](#)).

During supportive counseling, several changes were observed in the patient's psychological and behavioral responses. The patient demonstrated increased openness in expressing emotional concerns, including fear, sadness, and worries related to her illness ([Hudiyawati et al., 2022](#)). Over the course of the counseling sessions, the patient reported a noticeable reduction in anxiety and emotional tension. She also showed improved confidence in managing daily activities and a greater willingness to engage in self-care tasks within her physical limitations ([Aji, 2025](#)).

Functional observations indicated increased participation in basic self-care activities with minimal assistance. The patient became more actively involved in care-related decision-making and communicated more effectively with healthcare providers and family members. These outcomes suggest that supportive counseling contributed to improved psychological adjustment and strengthened self-care engagement during the inpatient period.

### Discussion

The results of this case report suggest that supportive counseling played an important role in enhancing psychological adaptation and self-care engagement in a patient with advanced breast cancer. The anxiety reduction and increased self-care involvement observed in this case align with recent research demonstrating that psychosocial interventions can positively influence emotional well-being and adaptive behaviors among patients with advanced and chronic illnesses ([Rizkasari et al., 2025](#)).

Psychological adaptation is a key component of adjustment to advanced cancer, involving cognitive and emotional processes that enable individuals to cope with illness-related stressors while maintaining motivation and a sense of control. In this case, supportive counseling facilitated emotional expression and coping by providing a supportive environment in which the patient could process her experiences and reframe her illness in a more manageable way. Similar mechanisms have been reported in recent counseling and oncology literature, highlighting the role of emotional validation and coping facilitation in improving psychological outcomes among cancer patients (Agla et al., 2024).

The improvement in self-care engagement observed in this case can be understood primarily as a psychological outcome rather than a direct result of physical recovery. Previous studies have shown that anxiety and emotional distress can significantly reduce patients' motivation and confidence to engage in self-care activities, even when physical capacity is partially preserved (Green & Aziz, 2020). By addressing emotional barriers through supportive counseling, the patient was better able to recognize her remaining abilities and participate actively in daily self-care.

Family involvement during the counseling process further supported the patient's psychological adaptation and continuity of care. Recent evidence indicates that family-inclusive psychosocial interventions enhance emotional support, reduce feelings of isolation, and promote sustained adaptive behaviors in patients with advanced disease, particularly in oncology settings (Li et al., 2023). This finding is consistent with the present case, in which family support appeared to strengthen the patient's confidence and motivation.

Compared with previous reports that primarily emphasize medical or nursing outcomes, this case contributes to the counseling literature by illustrating how supportive counseling can be integrated into routine clinical care to address psychological adaptation and self-care simultaneously (Aji & Rizkasari, 2021). Although derived from a single case and therefore not generalizable, the findings offer practical insights into the application of supportive counseling within holistic cancer care. This approach supports the growing recognition that addressing psychological dimensions is essential for comprehensive management of advanced breast cancer (Jing et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSION

This case report demonstrates that supportive counseling can serve as a meaningful psychosocial approach to enhance self-care engagement and psychological adaptation in patients with advanced breast cancer. By focusing on emotional support, coping facilitation, and reinforcement of patients' remaining capacities, supportive counseling addresses psychological barriers that often limit active participation in self-care. The findings of this case suggest that psychological adaptation plays a central role in enabling patients with advanced illness to maintain involvement in daily self-care activities despite ongoing physical limitations.

From a psychological perspective, this case highlights that improvements in self-care are not solely dependent on physical recovery but are closely linked to patients' emotional adjustment, sense of control, and self-efficacy. Supportive counseling facilitated a more adaptive response to illness by helping the patient process emotional distress, reduce anxiety, and reinterpret her condition in a more manageable and meaningful way. These processes contributed to enhanced psychological well-being and greater self-care engagement, underscoring the importance of addressing psychological dimensions in the care of patients with complex oncological conditions.

This case contributes to the development of psychology as a science by providing applied evidence for integrating supportive counseling into clinical oncology settings to promote psychological adaptation and self-care. The findings extend existing psychosocial literature by illustrating the practical role of counseling-based interventions in supporting adaptive functioning among patients with advanced cancer. Based on these insights, it is recommended that health

professionals incorporate supportive counseling into holistic cancer care to address emotional needs and strengthen patients' adaptive capacities. Future research involving larger samples and longer follow-up periods is warranted to examine further the effectiveness of supportive counseling in enhancing psychological adaptation and self-care among patients with advanced cancer.

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