An in-progress mixed methods study to test the usability of an interactive communication tool to help English- and French-speaking children express their cancer symptoms

Background

- Children with cancer experience many physical, psychological, school-based and behavioural symptoms during and after treatment that are often unreported, and therefore unmanaged.

- In order to help children express their symptoms, a computer-based program called Sisom was developed. Rigorous testing in Norway has shown Sisom significantly increases the number of symptoms reported.

- To account for cultural differences, it is important to evaluate Sisom in Canada.
The objective of the current phase of this study is to test the usability of Sisom, in terms of ease of use, usefulness, and aesthetics from the perspective of English- and French-speaking children with cancer.
Methods

Recruitment

30 oncology patients
• 10 English-speaking patients @ HSC
• 10 English-speaking patients @ MCH
• 10 French-speaking patients @ Sainte-Justine

30-minute Game Play Session

Participants use a laptop to visit Sisom’s “feeling islands” to answer questions about their symptoms, problems and feelings, and complete a symptom report.

Semi-Structured Interview

Participants are asked questions about Sisom’s aesthetics, ease of use, and usefulness.
# Results

| Usefulness                        | 22/26 of participants thought Sisom was useful.  
|                                 | 85% of participants would like to use Sisom again in the hospital.  
|                                 | “The questions were very on point and very like, I guess you could relate to them easily, I guess I could.” – Male participant, Age 12 |
| Ease of Use                      | 92% of participants found Sisom easy to use.  
|                                 | 42% of participants needed support using the Likert scale within Sisom.  
|                                 | Some symptoms were not understood by at least one child and required clarification from the interviewer. |
| Aesthetics                       | The majority of participants enjoyed the graphics & images in Sisom.  
|                                 | The most well-liked “feeling island” was “At the Hospital.” |
| Identified Issues                | Parental role  
|                                 | Concept of death |
Conclusions/Next Steps

• English- and French-speaking children in this study endorse the use of Sisom to describe their cancer-related symptoms.

• They found Sisom easy to use, useful and aesthetically pleasing.

• Future research includes testing feasibility via pilot randomized controlled trial.
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