

# Prosocial internet support group not beneficial for breast cancer

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Photo: U.S. National Institutes of Health

a higher level of [depression](#) and anxiety symptoms relative to participants in the S-ISG.

"Despite the successful manipulation of supportive behaviors, the P-ISG did not produce better mental health outcomes in distressed survivors of breast cancer relative to an S-ISG," the authors write.

"Helping others may not be beneficial as a treatment for distressed survivors of breast cancer."

**More information:** [Abstract](#)

[Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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(HealthDay)—A prosocial Internet support group (ISG) that encourages breast cancer survivors with elevated anxiety or depression to help others may not be beneficial, according to a study published online Nov. 17 in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Stephen J. Lepore, Ph.D., from Temple University in Philadelphia, and colleagues conducted a two-armed [randomized controlled trial](#) with pre- and post-test assessments to compare the efficacy of a standard ISG (S-ISG) and an enhanced prosocial ISG (P-ISG). Participants included 184 women diagnosed in the past 36 months with nonmetastatic [breast cancer](#) who reported elevated anxiety or depression. Six professionally facilitated live chat sessions and access to an asynchronous discussion board were included as part of both groups; P-ISG also included structured opportunities to help and encourage others.

The researchers found that participants in the P-ISG exhibited more supportive behaviors, posted more "other-focused" messages and fewer "self-focused" messages, and expressed less negative emotion compared with the S-ISG participants. After the intervention, participants in the P-ISG had

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