

Crowdfunding for Cutaneous Oncological Surgery

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Background

In the past decade, crowdfunding campaigns have become increasingly utilized for fundraising to assist with medical costs. The use of crowdfunding for medical costs is largely underreported in the medical literature and rarely discussed among practitioners and patients. Its use in cutaneous oncological surgeries has not been investigated to date.

Objective

The purpose of this study was to better understand the use of crowdfunding for covering costs related to cutaneous oncological surgical procedures and the factors associated with successful campaigns.

Methods

A retrospective review of campaigns seeking cost assistance related to cutaneous oncological surgery were evaluated from January 2018 to November 2019 on the GoFundMe crowdfunding platform. Study inclusion required campaigns to list skin cancer type and treatment type. Demographics, cancer features, campaign characteristics, and funding data were collected. Univariate and multivariate analyses were performed.

Results

150 campaigns were included. 54% were male, and 29.3% of campaign authors were the patient. 124 campaigns (82.7%) specified fundraising for surgeries. 33 campaigns (22%) were successful (defined by study authors as receiving 70% or more of the funding goal). 20/33 (60.6%) successful campaigns were for cancers located on the head and neck compared to other anatomical locations (P value 0.09). Cancers on the head and neck achieved a greater percentage of funding goals compared to other locations (P value 0.02 (Fig. 1)). Cancers on the trunk received a greater mean overall donation amount compared to other locations (P value 0.02 (Fig. 1)). 13/33 (39.4%) successful campaigns were for melanoma, 5/33 (15.2%) for basal cell carcinoma, 5/33 (15.2%) for squamous cell carcinoma, and 10/33 (30.3%) for unspecified cancer type (Fig. 2).

Men received a mean donation of \$5,423 and women received \$2,735 (P value 0.048), achieving a mean 36.39% of the funding goal compared to 38.39% (P value 0.722), respectively (Figs. 3 and 4)). Patient-authored campaigns received a mean \$4,124 compared to a third party with a mean of \$4,212 (P value 0.95), achieving a mean 40.71% of funding goal versus 35.9% (P value 0.43), respectively. Successful campaigns had a mean 280 social media shares compared to "unsuccessful" campaigns with a mean of 190 (P value 0.18). Campaigns with longer narratives received a mean donation of \$5,632 versus shorter narratives with \$1,463 (P value 0.003) and achieved a mean 44.01% goal versus 24.68% (P value 0.001), respectively. Overall 27.6% (27/98) of longer narrative campaigns were successful compared to 11.5% (6/52) shorter narratives (P value 0.018).

Conclusion

Total donations were higher for men, cancers on the trunk, and campaigns with longer narratives. A higher percentage of funding goal was achieved for cancers on the head and neck and longer narrative campaigns. Finally, the only factor that contributed to overall campaign success ($\geq 70\%$ of funding goal) was narrative length. Cancer type, author type, and number of social media shares did not play a statistically significant role in campaign success, though trends were observed. This is an initial study to better understand the role of crowdfunding to cover the costs related to skin cancer treatment. Future studies will include a larger review of crowdfunding campaigns related to skin cancer and compare skin cancer-related campaigns to campaigns for non-cutaneous malignancies.

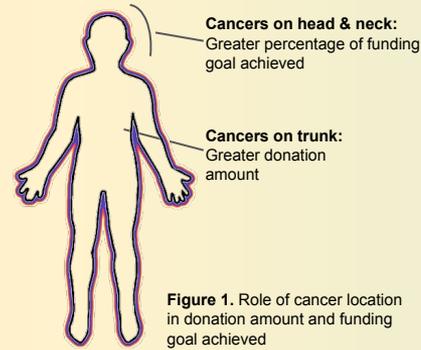


Figure 1. Role of cancer location in donation amount and funding goal achieved

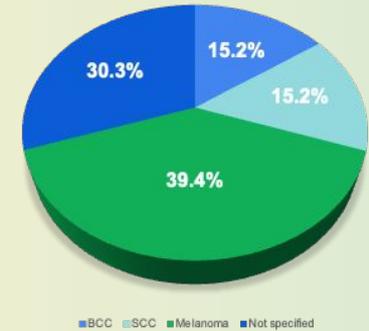


Figure 2. Distribution of successful campaigns by skin cancer types

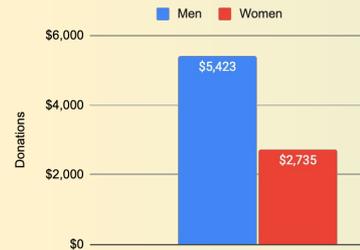


Figure 3. Donation amounts by gender

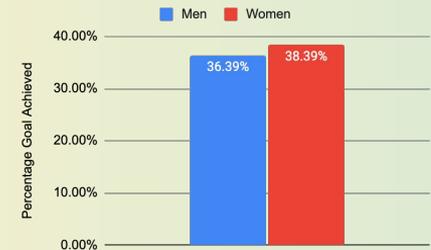


Figure 4. Percentage goal achieved by gender

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