



Management of Depression and Anxiety in Cancer

COURSE SYLLABUS (MDAC)

2026

Course Educator:

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Course Format: Self-Directed Learning

Contact Information and Technical Support: support@desouzainstitute.com

Registration: Required

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A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Management of Depression and Anxiety in Cancer course was created in collaboration between Cancer Care Ontario (CCO). This course consists of six online modules promoting an evidence-based holistic approach to care and management of depression and anxiety in individuals with cancer. The content and structure of the course is based on the *Pan-Canadian Practice Guideline: Screening, Assessment and Management of Psychosocial Distress, Major Depression and Anxiety in Adults with Cancer* (Version 2, 2015).

The following areas are covered in the modules:

- Prevalence and risk factors for anxiety and depression in cancer patients
- The bio-psycho-social etiology and pathophysiology of anxiety and depression
- Elements involved in initial screening, comprehensive assessment and focused assessment
- Assessing risk of immediate harm
- Assessing various levels of distress severity
- Clinical pathway based on distress severity
- Psychosocial treatment options
- Pharmacological treatment options
- Practical team-based interventions across the continuum of emotional distress

This course has been designed for front-line providers, including physicians; nurses; and allied health care providers. Participants will have **5 weeks** to complete the course.

B. de Souza DESIGNATION CREDITS

Domain of Practice	Treatment and Delivery of Evidence Based Care
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Learning Hours	10 hours
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de Souza Credit	0.25 credits
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C. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course covers core competencies outlined in the Pan-Canadian Practice Guideline.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify risk factors for anxiety and depression
- Explain the elements involved in initial screening and comprehensive assessment
- Describe the utility of validated anxiety and depression rating scales

- Discriminate pathological states from adaptive anxiety
- Describe common anxiety disorders in cancer
- Explain how major depression is diagnosed in a patient with cancer
- Explain how distress severity determines treatment interventions
- Recognize when to refer to psychosocial specialist
- List the non-pharmacological and pharmacological approaches for the management and treatment of depression and anxiety
- Raise awareness among colleagues regarding the clinical significance of anxiety and depression to support stigma reduction for patients
- Utilize supportive counselling tips for emotional distress across all phases of the cancer journey

D. MODE OF LEARNING

The main mechanisms to facilitate learning in this course will entail eLearning.

eLearning, offered through the de Souza eLearning centre, will cover the following activities: the application of knowledge and self-directed reading assignments. The eLearning environment fosters a self-directed approach for participants to progress through the modules at a convenient time, either at home or work.

- **Learning and application**: Sections and modules are developed by de Souza education team to reflect the latest knowledge in depression and anxiety care and management. The content is up to date, and the learning format is interactive.
- **Readings** are intended to enhance the eLearning content surrounding key topic areas.
- Technical support will be provided throughout the course.

E. MODES OF EVALUATION

As part of the evaluation process, you are required to complete the following:

- **A baseline evaluation**: this survey assesses your knowledge, attitude, confidence, and learning methods before you begin the eLearning modules for the course.
- **eLearning modules**: It is expected that you will complete all activities and case studies within all the modules by the course end date.
- **Exit Exam**: You must complete and obtain a minimum of 80% on the final multiple choice exam. Participants receive a maximum of two attempts to pass the final exam.
- **Post evaluation**: At the end of the course, you will be required to complete a post course evaluation. This will be facilitated electronically through eLearning.

When you have successfully met all the above requirements, you will receive 10 learning hours as well as 0.25 credit towards obtaining your de Souza designation. An email will be sent to you containing instructions on how to download your certificate of completion via your “My account”.

F. EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

To be successful in completing this course, you are encouraged to set aside 2 to 3 hours each week to complete each section as learning is primarily self-directed. The total learning hours for this course is 10 hours.

Your course activity completion will be reflected in your gradebook. You will be expected to complete all sections/ modules through the de Souza eLearning system.

G. SUGGESTED COURSE TIMELINE

All sections/modules are to be completed within the **5-week** course offering time period. The course is comprised of the following sections:

Section	Topic	Learning activities	Suggested allotment of time
1	Bio-psycho-social etiology and pathophysiology of anxiety and depression	- Interactive learning activities: natural course, risk factors, monoamine hypothesis of depression, and inflammatory cytokine hypothesis - Unit quiz	1.0 hour
2	Screening for Anxiety and Depression, Assessing and Managing Suicidal Ideation	- Interactive learning activities: rationale for distress screening, barriers and myths, practice guide algorithm, team role - Video: assessing and managing suicidal ideation and distinguishing it from the rational wish for physician assisted dying, or the desire for hastened death in cancer patients - Unit quiz	2.0 hours
3	Comprehensive and Focused Assessment of Anxiety	- Interactive learning activities: general approach in assessment, validated scales for anxiety assessment - Case examples: assessment for mild, moderate, severe anxiety - Unit quiz	2.0 hours
4	Comprehensive and Focused Assessment of Depression	Interactive learning activities: depression assessment, diagnosis and differential diagnosis, complexities of diagnosing depression in cancer	2.0 hours

		• Case examples: assessment for mild, moderate, severe depression • Video: assessing depression • Unit quiz	
5	Psychosocial and Pharmacological Interventions	• Interactive learning activities: care pathway, stepped care model, psychosocial treatments, pharmacotherapy, combined treatment, antidepressant classes, factors to consider when initiating antidepressant • Case examples: managing distressed cancer patients with language barrier & complex psychosocial needs • Unit quiz	2.0 hours
6	Team-based Best Practices	• Interactive learning activities: supportive counselling tips, brief structured therapies, burn out and compassion fatigue • Video: empathic communication • Unit quiz	1.0 hour
Final Exam (Multiple Choice Questions)			

H. COURSE EDUCATOR

[Jiahui Wong, M.D., PhD](#)

I. EDUCATOR AVAILABILITY

The educator for this course will be responsible for answering questions related to the course content, guiding online discussion, leading video conferencing sessions, and be available for questions from participants throughout the course. If you have questions about the course or are having difficulty with the course content, you can email support@desouzainstitute.com and include the course name “Course Name” in the subject line. The response time for an enquiry is within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend.

J. VIRTUAL LIBRARY

de Souza Institute has a virtual library that you can access 24 hours a day using your de Souza Institute login and password. There are 1500 e-Journals, 200 e-books and 8 on-line databases (e.g., CINAHL, Ovid-Medline) you can access to get the additional reading materials for your course.

The direct link is <https://library.desouzainstitute.com/login>.

K. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

eLearning Centre Orientation

The [de Souza Institute eLearning Centre Orientation Course](#) is a free, and brief module designed to help you navigate your online courses successfully. If this is your first time accessing the platform, completing this orientation will teach you how the learning management system works and how to track your progress.

de Souza Institute Support

If you have questions about the content of a course, please email support@desouzainstitute.com.

If you need assistance accessing or navigating the eLearning Centre, please refer to the eLearning Orientation course. If you experience any technical difficulties, please contact support@desouzainstitute.com.

L. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Click the links below to read de Souza Institute's respective policies.

[Academic Honesty and Copyright Policy](#)

[Cancellations, Incomplete and No-Show Policy](#)

[Request for Accommodation Policy](#)