FONDAZIONE BRUNO KESSLER
MAGAZINE

Preventing stress in women with breast cancer: virtual coach ALBA is here

October 1, 2024

Fondazione Bruno Kessler, in collaboration with the Trento Province Healthcare System, is coordinating the ALBA research project to investigate the contribution of "digital therapies" in promoting mental well-being and preventing stress in women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

The *"ALBA – A virtual coach to promote mental well-being and prevent stress in women diagnosed with breast cancer"* pilot study has started: coordinated by the **Center for Digital Health** & Wellbeing at Fondazione Bruno Kessler in collaboration with **APSS**, the **Trento Province Healthcare System** , the research project was created with the aim of developing mental support digital solutions for the well-being of patients with breast cancer – in 2023 in Italy an estimated 55. 900 new cases – who present mild/moderate levels of distress, providing them with essential and effective skills to manage diagnosis-related stress.

"New digital and artificial intelligence technologies have great potential to be able to make digital assistants capable of administering low-intensity psychoeducational interventions to address this problem," Stefano Forti, director of the Center for Digital Health & Wellbeing at Fondazione Bruno Kessler said. "In this context, a research project will start with the aim of exploring the feasibility of using a virtual coach, ALBA, aimed at promoting quality of life and perceived mental well-being and managing stressful situations reporded by women diagnosed with breast cancer."

The *ALBA coach* will interact with women for six consecutive weeks through the digital version of a cognitive behavioral therapy intervention created and validated by the World Health Organization (WHO), called **Self Help Plus**.

The WHO intervention was digitized by FBK's *team* of technologists and researchers, with APSS experts and health workers (oncologists, psychologists) in collaboration with the **WHO Collaborating Center of the Department of Neuroscience at the University of Verona**. Patients will interact with the virtual *coach* once a week through conversations supported by audio and video information materials. In addition, questionnaires will be

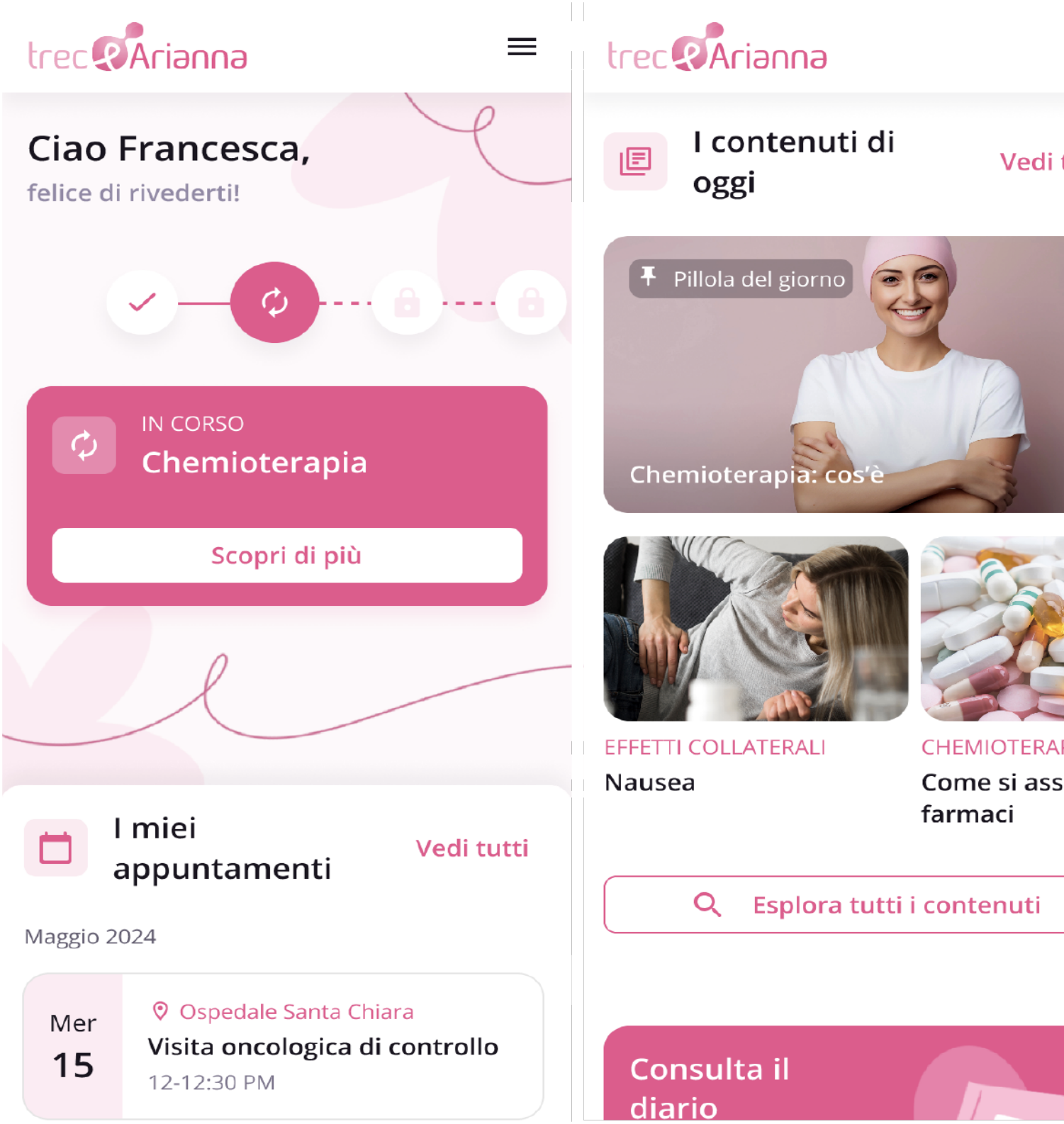
administered to investigate the experience of use and the degree of involvement, as well as the level of mental well-being at the beginning, at the end and four months after the conclusion of the psychoeducational program. Once feasibility and, in a second phase, clinical efficacy are validated, the same digital format will make ALBA a scalable service that can be delivered widely.

“We believe that ALBA can be a valuable support to women diagnosed with breast cancer who have mild-to-moderate levels of stress,” Dr. Antonella Ferro from the Breast Cancer Unit of the Trento Province Healthcare System said.

“ALBA is a research project that aims to test the feasibility of using a virtual coach for managing distress in women diagnosed with breast cancer. *Early intervention is very important in this area as well, so we hope that this research will yield promising results,”*Dr. **Chiara Guella**, director of the Clinical Psychology Operational Unit at theTrento province Healthcare System, said.

ALBA will be implemented within **TreC_Arianna,** the *smartphone* app that will be available free of charge in the coming months for the patients of the Breast Unit, APSS’s multidisciplinary breast cancer treatment center. The system-wide project, in which **TrentinoSalute4.0** – the center of competence on digital health – is involved, sees the collaboration of the Autonomous Province of Trento, the Trento Province Healthcare System and Fondazione Bruno Kessler and was created with the aim of supporting organizational and management choices in the diagnosis-treatment-support program for patients with early-stage breast cancer, encouraging better physician-patient communication.

In addition to tracking and collecting all interventions performed and data generated by patients, **TreC_Arianna** promotes *self-management* and *patient empowerment*; it also provides training, education, support and motivation tools by providing information materials.



Breast cancer in numbers

According to the latest report entitled *"The Numbers of Cancer in Italy 2023"* by AIOM – Italian Medical Oncology Association, an estimated 55,900 new breast cancer cases were diagnosed in our country in 2023; the 5-year net survival rate is 88% and the chance of living an additional 4 years, after surviving the first year after diagnosis, is 91%. The estimated number of breast cancer survivors by 2023 was 834,200 women.

———-

Unità Comunicazione e Relazioni esterne – Communication and External Relations Unit

ue.kbf(ta)aidem
– 0461 312482

—

TrentinoSalute4.0 – Media Relations

ue.kbf(ta)renaicul

Marzia Lucianer 331-6228664

—-

SEC Newgate – Via Ferrante Aporti 8, Milano
Laura Arghittu –

ti.etagwences(ta)uttihgra.arual

Daniele Murgia – mobile 338 433 0031 –
ti.etagwences(ta)aigrum.eleinad

Vittoria Tonetti – mobile 334 906 4287 –
ti.etagwences(ta)ittenot.airottiv

PERMALINK

https://magazine.fbk.eu/en/news/prevenire-lo-stress-nelle-donne-con-tumore-al-seno-arriva-alba-il-coach-virtuale/

TAGS

- #alba
- #apss
- #artificialintelligence
- #coach virtuale
- #digitale
- #digitalhealthwellbeing
- #supporto psicologico
- #TreC

- #trec_arianna
- #trentinosalute4.0
- #virtuale

AUTHORS

- Editorial Staff