Assessing Needs among Cancer Survivors in Georgia

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An estimated 14.5 million cancer survivors live in the United States. In Georgia, there are currently 355,870 survivors. It is predicted that the number of survivors 5 years post diagnosis will increase to 37% within the decade.

Georgia has a long standing history of collaboration to assess and enhance the quality of survivorship care in the state with leaders from the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education (GCORE), Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University, Regional Cancer Coalition of Georgia, American Cancer Society, Georgia State University Clinical Oncology (NASCOC), and the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health, among others. Representatives serve as members of the Georgia Cancer Control Consortium (GC3), who leads the Cancer Control Plan.

One of the eight priorities of the plan is focused on Survivorship. In 2013, the GC3 Survivorship Workgroup (SWG) began working to assess a state-wide survivors’ needs assessment to understand the physical, psychosocial, practical and spiritual needs of adult cancer survivors. While needs of cancer survivors have been assessed, there is less knowledge about unmet needs.

METHODS

The GC3 SWG and the Rollins School of Public Health developed a cross-sectional survey using National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) and Commission on Cancer (CoC) guidelines. The survey was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Emory University in 2014.

Survey Methodology:
- 76 items
- Recruitment & Dissemination
  - Adult cancer survivors who had completed treatment and live in the state of Georgia.
  - Distributed through survivorship programs of the CoC hospitals (n = 40), 16 Survivorship-focused non-profit organizations, and 5 Regional Cancer Coalitions via email, social media, and mail.
  - 740 responses received September - December 2014.
  - Respondents needed in 46 of 48 Counties (n=159)

RESULTS

Respondents were primarily female (78%), married (65%), college-educated (55%) and White (83%). They were 56 years old (SD=10) and 28% (n=202) were Hispanic. Most survivors were White (n=377), male (n=377) and the mean age was 53 years (SD=12). The SWG segmented survivors by sociodemographic characteristics (Table 1).

A high proportion of survivors reported moderate to extreme levels of emotional distress with: depression (32.2%), anxiety (32.1%), stress (30.4%), fear of recurrence (28.0%) and defining a “new normal” (25.9%).

Over 50% of survivors reported receiving little or no assistance from providers for these needs. Only 35% received a survivorship care plan (SCP) and 98% of those who received it reported it was helpful.

CONCLUSIONS

Results demonstrate the psychosocial needs of cancer survivors in the state. However, racial and ethnic minority groups and people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds were significantly underrepresented in this study. Further research is needed to expand the study sample by working with community organizations and CoC hospitals to develop a more targeted approach to reaching individuals with limited English proficiency, limited access to technology and other minority populations.

One important resource launched in 2014, Georgia’s Cancer Survivorship Connection (CSC) is the first statewide comprehensive online portal that provides evidence-based survivorship information and resources for Georgia survivors, caregivers and healthcare professionals.

The site will be enhanced to ensure survivors’ resources are available and highlighted to address the unmet needs.

For more information, please contact the Georgia Health Policy Center at 404.413.0314 or visit us online at www.gphc.gsu.edu.

REFERENCES