

Patient Perceptions of Survivorship Care Plans: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation

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PURPOSE: To understand the perceptions of patients with cancer regarding the role and purpose of a survivorship care plan (SCP) to inform content and delivery opportunities.

PARTICIPANTS & SETTING: A mixed-methods evaluation was conducted among patients at a survivorship clinic for high-risk survivors of sarcomas in an academic medical center.

METHODOLOGIC APPROACH: An electronic survey was administered, followed by qualitative telephone interviews.

FINDINGS: 51 surveys were delivered, and 23 surveys were completed. Eight telephone interviews were completed. Content analysis revealed that participants value the SCP as a health management tool to address information needs and reduce fear of recurrence. Few participants shared their SCP with other healthcare providers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING: Patients use their SCP as a health management tool to understand the details of their cancer history and treatment and to manage their health concerns. Nurses who care for patients with cancer are well positioned to use the SCP as a patient education tool.

KEYWORDS mixed methods; survivorship care plan; patient perceptions; mental health

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The number of cancer survivors is steadily increasing, with an expected 18 million cancer survivors in the United States by 2022 (Siegel, Miller, & Jemal, 2017). Some cancer survivors are at an increased risk for developing multiple chronic diseases, which has been characterized as premature aging (Gibson et al., 2018; Ness et al., 2018). As the survivor population grows, the needs of this heterogeneous population is garnering increased attention (Shay, Parsons, & Vernon, 2017). Multidimensional and complex in nature, cancer survivorship is associated with ongoing medical needs related to the post-treatment effects of cancer therapies, continuous monitoring for recurrence, and numerous other significant psychosocial sequelae surrounding the management of cancer survivorship. In an effort to address these needs, in 2005, the Institute of Medicine recommended all cancer survivors receive an individualized survivorship care plan (SCP) on treatment completion (Hewitt, Greenfield, & Stovall, 2006). SCPs vary but should contain a complete treatment summary, information about treatment-related long-term effects and late effects, recommendations for screening and follow-up care, and recommendations for health maintenance for the patients and their caregivers (Benci et al., 2018). Since this recommendation, SCPs have taken multiple forms—from templates that can be completed by healthcare providers with or without patient involvement to practice-specific SCPs that vary in content, design, and messaging. SCPs are intended to inform cancer survivors and healthcare providers about ongoing needs related to cancer survivorship and facilitate communication among the healthcare providers involved in follow-up care.

Since the 2005 recommendation to implement SCPs to all cancer survivors, cancer programs have struggled to implement SCPs (van de Poll-Franse, Nicolaije, & Ezendam, 2017). One proposed reason is a lack of empirical evidence that supports positive