

Experiences of Adolescents and Young Adults Living With Advanced Cancer: An Integrative Review

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PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION: Knowledge about the experiences of adolescents and young adults (AYAs) living with advanced cancer may be limited. This review was conducted to examine the literature concerning this subject.

LITERATURE SEARCH: A comprehensive search was conducted using CINAHL®, the Cochrane Library of Systematic Reviews, Embase®, the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), and PubMed®.

DATA EVALUATION: Each study was systematically assessed. An evidence table detailing key components was compiled.

SYNTHESIS: There is a growing body of knowledge about the experiences of individuals with advanced cancer. However, insufficient evidence exists regarding the experiences of AYAs with advanced cancer.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH: The lack of knowledge about AYAs and how they experience living with advanced cancer requires additional research; this will lead to increased understanding of their challenges and more effective supportive interventions.

KEYWORDS adolescents and young adults; advanced cancer; integrative review; interventions
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Evidence suggests that people are living longer with advanced cancer as a result of improved screening, early detection, and treatment advances (American Cancer Society, 2019; Kamal et al., 2011; Salakari, Surakka, Nurminen, & Pylkkänen, 2015). Most individuals with advanced cancer face psychological, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual issues related to their diagnosis (Kamal et al., 2011; Meier & Beresford, 2008). Some individuals with advanced cancer may experience accumulating symptom burden and deterioration of function, whereas others may remain relatively independent and functional for longer periods of time. In addition, although some individuals living with advanced cancer may experience a steady decline in function, others may retain a moderately high level of performance (Lunney, Lynn, Foley, Lipson, & Guralnik, 2003). Studies have described individuals living with advanced cancer as feeling forgotten and alone, with persistent unrecognized and unmet needs (Haylock, 2010a, 2010b; Lynn, 2005; Singer et al., 2015).

The adolescent and young adult (AYA) cohort is made up of individuals aged 15–39 years (National Cancer Institute, 2018). Cancer is the leading cause of death among this age group when accidental deaths are excluded (Siegel, Miller, & Jemal, 2016). Diagnosis occurs at a time when these individuals are developing identities, finding their places in the world, establishing careers, creating relationships, and building families (Chen, Parmar, & Gartshore, 2014; Cleeland et al., 2014; Shaha & Bauer-Wu, 2009). Overall, there is limited understanding of the biologic, genetic, epidemiologic, and psychosocial factors of, as well as the quality-of-life implications for, this group. Physical and functional challenges may exacerbate emotional burdens that accompany the disease and its treatment.

It is well established that more research with this population is needed across all stages of disease (DeRouen et al., 2015; National Cancer Institute,