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Living the New Normal

Survivorship

“An individual is considered a cancer survivor from the time of diagnosis, through the balance of his or her life. Family members, friends, and caregivers are also impacted by the survivorship experience and are therefore included in this definition.”

Office of Cancer Survivorship at the National Cancer Institutes

Survivorship

Three seasons of survival:

The first is **acute survival** that begins with diagnosis and continues through active treatment.

The second season is that of **extended survival** which begins with the termination of active treatment and a period of disease remission.

The third season is **permanent** survival or cure.

Key tasks of survivorship

- Fear of recurrence
- Late effects of treatment
- Diet and exercise
- Sexuality
- Cognitive changes
- Surveillance
- Back to work
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Fertility

Fear of recurrence

- Persists for many years
- Intrusive thoughts
- Panic attacks
- Interventions
 - Diary
 - Refocusing thoughts
 - Support groups
 - Finding and accepting help
 - Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Mindfulness-based stress reduction

Long- & late-effects of treatment

- Long-term effects are those side effects that first appear during treatment and persist after treatment is over
- Late effects of cancer treatment are not there during treatment but appear years later

PLEASE STAND UP

Diet and exercise

- Challenging to make lifestyle changes
- Obesity affects prognosis
- Importance of healthy diet
- Multiple benefits of exercise
- Interventions
 - Referral to nutritionist
 - Rehabilitation programs
 - Involve whole family

Sexuality

- Often neglected
- All treatment modalities affect sexuality
- Trigger for relationship difficulties
- Interventions
 - Couples therapy
 - Help with communication
 - Limited treatments available or useful

Cognitive changes

- Multiple changes
 - Verbal and visual memory
 - Inability to process information
 - Motor functioning
 - Difficulty focusing, paying attention, concentrating
 - Language difficulties
- Interventions
 - ? assessment
 - methylphenidate
 - Reassurance
 - reminders, notes, digital diary
 - exercise

What monitoring of your own health do you do?

- Colorectal cancer screening after age 50
- Mammograms
- Pap smears
- Blood pressure

Surveillance

- Important for the survivor to play an active role
- Survivor must know what is required and when
- Survivorship care plans

Back to work

- Financial, support, self esteem
- Advance planning
- Marker of recovery
- Interventions
 - Consult occupational health specialist
 - Written plan
 - Informing co-workers

AND NOW....

Depression

- End of treatment issues
 - Side effects worst
 - Leaving safety of high intensity care
 - Deprofessionalizing
- Signs and symptoms
 - Sadness, anhedonia, hopelessness, helplessness, low self-esteem and self-worth, guilt, suicidal thoughts, difficulty sleeping
- PTSD
- Depression = increased risk of recurrence
- Interventions
 - CBT
 - Medication

Fatigue

- Influenced by sleep quality
- Often persists long after treatment is over
- Unrealistic expectation
- Interventions
 - Screening for causes and modification
 - Balancing activity and rest
 - Exercise
 - ? medications

POP QUIZ

- What is the success rate of pregnancy after egg freezing? 10% 25% 75%

1.5 – 4 % (700 pregnancies in the world)

- What is the pregnancy success rate after sperm freezing? 10% 25% 75%

up to 100%

- Women who are pre-menopausal at the time of chemotherapy become infertile

TRUE OR FALSE ?

Fertility

- Often neglected
- Source of distress
- Significant costs
- Unrealistic expectations of new reproductive technology
- Interventions
 - referral to fertility specialists
 - valid information for patients

Summary

- Survivorship is a distinct phase
- New normal may be better than old
- 10 key challenges
- Opportunities for research

Questions and comments....
