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## June is Cancer Survivorship Awareness Month

Dear North Dakota Physicians,

The second of four articles this month focused on cancer addresses survivorship quality care. Today there are 13 million cancer survivors in the United States. This number is expected to reach 18 million by 2022. This data recognizes the importance of efforts addressing the health concerns of cancer survivors. As more patients transition back to their primary care, it is vital to coordinate their care with increased attention to disease prevention and health promotion. Like patients in the diagnostic and treatment phases of care, post treatment cancer survivors have significant physical and psychosocial concerns. These concerns range from late and long term effects resulting from cancer treatment to emotional issues such as fear of recurrence, to practical issues such as paying medical bills. The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) suggests that at least 50% of survivors suffer from some late effects of cancer treatment. The most common being depression, pain and fatigue.

**Depression and Anxiety** are common due to multiple stressors, vulnerabilities and challenges survivors face. 29% of survivors are affected by anxiety and depression, and as many as 19 % meet the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. Fear of recurrence leads to worry and distress related to surveillance and physical symptoms that may or may not be related to the cancer diagnosis. Uncontrolled anxiety and/or depression have a significant negative impact on a survivor's quality of life. It can be due to physical compromise, social isolation, or work and financial problems.

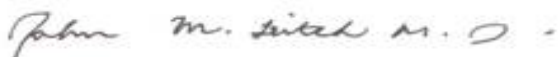
**Pain** often leads to psychological distress and poor quality of life in approximately 33% of post-treatment cancer survivors. Pain in survivors is often ineffectively managed. Barriers to pain management include lack of training in health care providers, fears of side effects, fears of addiction and reimbursement issues.

**Cancer Related Fatigue** is a distressing persistent, subjective sense of physical, emotional, and/or cognitive tiredness or exhaustion related to cancer or cancer treatment that is not proportional to recent activity and interferes with usual functioning. Persistent fatigue is experienced by 17-26% of cancer survivors. Persistent fatigue negatively affects quality of life and raises higher levels of emotional distress compared to individuals without fatigue.

Continuity of care between oncologists and primary care physicians in addition to high quality care leads to overall quality of life for cancer survivors.

The following website provides education for primary physicians who care for these cancer survivors. The learning series offers free continuing education credits. These modules can be found at [www.cancersurvivorshipcentereducation.org](http://www.cancersurvivorshipcentereducation.org)

Regards,



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