
June is Cancer Survivorship Awareness Month

Dear North Dakota Physicians,

The third of four articles this month focused on cancer addresses survivorship care coordination. As the population of cancer survivors continues to grow, the demand for follow up care is essential. This care will likely be performed by the primary care teams. Patients are not the only ones confused about survivorship care; primary care physicians also have questions. Researchers surveyed primary care physicians and found an array of knowledge gaps. Sixty-one percent were uncertain about their role in survivorship care, 46% were uncertain about patterns of morbidity among cancer survivors, and another 31% were unsure about what care is recommended for survivors. This data reflects the need for improved care coordination between oncologists and primary care providers.

In 2005, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) compiled a report entitled, "Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Transition." According to this report, the essential components of survivorship care include:

- 1) **Prevention** of new and recurrent cancers and other late effects
- 2) **Surveillance** for cancer spread, recurrence, and second cancers; assessment of medical and psychosocial late effects
- 3) **Intervention** for consequences of cancer and treatment, for example: medical problems such as lymphedema and sexual dysfunction; symptoms, including pain and fatigue; psychological distress experienced by cancer survivors and their caregivers; and concerns related to employment, insurance, and disability
- 4) **Coordination** between primary care providers and specialists to ensure that all of the survivor's health needs are met

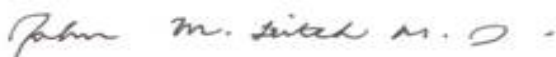
To ensure care coordination among oncologists and primary care physicians, a treatment summary and care plan communicates the survivor's health status, provides a 'roadmap' to ensure survivor appropriate services and clearly delineates which physician is responsible for which aspect of care.

The Commission on Cancer (CoC) standard includes the provision of a treatment summary and care plan to the patients at the completion of treatment. They are intended to clarify physicians' roles and responsibilities for survivorship care, inform primary care practitioners about post treatment and recommended follow up care, educate patients about their treatment, possible late and long term effects, educate on healthy behaviors including diet and exercise, and provide a list of community resources available to them.

A Team approach is priority to bridge that 'gap' in survivorship care addressing post treatment needs therefore improving their health and quality of life.

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

Regards,



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