Is Survivorship Care Plan Discussion Important to Patients?

Amy E. B. Leatherwood, MSN, FNP-BC, Charles R. Thomas Jr., MD, Sara J. Walker, PhD, Susan Hedlund, MSW
Department of Radiation Medicine, Oregon Health and Sciences University, Portland, OR

Background
The 2015 Commission on Cancer standard requires that cancer survivors receive a personalized survivorship care plan (SCP). There exists a gap in consistency of how and when this plan is delivered. There is a need to evaluate patient satisfaction with personalized care along with direct education regarding the SCP and follow up.

The aim of the current study was to determine the 1) rate at which cancer survivors find in-person discussion of SCP helpful, and 2) the rate at which they find the in-person discussion more helpful than the alternatives.

Methods
An anonymous questionnaire was routinely administered, for quality assurance purposes, to cancer patients who completed treatment in a radiation oncology setting at a NCI-Designated Cancer Center. The population consisted of survivors of breast, prostate, colon, anal, pancreatic, lung, and liver cancers. Patients were given the questionnaire at the conclusion of a survivorship visit with a nurse practitioner devoted to survivorship care. During the visit they received a SCP with full discussion and explanation of the content. The questionnaire asks two Yes/No questions: 1) Did you find the survivorship visit helpful and/or educational? 2) Was it more helpful to have the survivorship summary explained to you in person?

Results
71 survivorship visit patients were offered a questionnaire to complete at the end of their visit. 71 completed questionnaires were received from patients. Of these 71 questionnaires, 69/71 or 97% of responses were “yes” for question 1. For question 2, 68/71, or 96% of responses were “yes.”

Discussion
The current literature on the effectiveness of survivorship visits is growing. “Beyond just participating in survivorship care, survivors should ideally be engaged as partners in their care, but cancer care providers often struggle to educate patients about the goals and importance of survivorship.”

We have an important role to play in ongoing research and implementation of evidence-based ideas for optimal cancer survivorship care. This gives us the opportunity to shape future of survivorship care though careful planning and by actively using feedback received from our patients to continue to improve care.

Conclusion
Our data show that the majority of patients are finding survivorship summaries to be a positive aspect of the care continuum. In addition, patients are also indicating that visits “in person,” with face-to-face explanation of survivorship summaries, are more helpful than receiving a summary without verbal involvement or explanation.

These findings suggest that such in-person discussions could be considered important in quality cancer care. Future directions include investigating the effect of other individual, disease, or treatment characteristics on an individual’s preference for SCP delivery.

References

Contact
Amy Leatherwood, MSN, FNP-BC
OHSU Department of Radiation Medicine
Email: A Leatherwood@ohsu.edu
Website: http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/what-is-cancer/statistics/nci-site-summary
Phone: (503) 494-8756

"Yes" 97% of responses were “yes.”
"No" 3% of responses were “no.”