What Factors Affect Quality of Life in Older Patients with Cancer?

Release Date:
Tuesday, December 19, 2017 1:06 pm EST

Terms:
- Cancer
- All Journals and Research

Dateline City:
Hoboken, NJ

Contacts:
Dawn Peters (US) +1 781-388-8408 sciencenewsroom@wiley.com Follow us on Twitter @WileyNews

A new study provides insights on the factors that affect health-related quality of life in older adults with cancer. Published early online in CANCER, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, the findings support the importance of addressing persistent symptoms, managing comorbidities, promoting leisure-time physical activity, and addressing financial challenges.

A new study provides insights on the factors that affect health-related quality of life in older adults with cancer. Published early online in CANCER, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, the findings support the importance of addressing persistent symptoms, managing comorbidities, promoting leisure-time physical activity, and addressing financial challenges.

Of the 15 million people living with cancer in the United States in 2016, 62 percent were aged 65 years or older. This proportion is growing over time, and soon three-quarters of cancer survivors will be in this age group. Understanding the most important factors that contribute to improving or maintaining good quality of life beyond the initial treatment period can help identify survivors who are most vulnerable and at risk for poor health outcomes.

To investigate the issue, Maria Pisu, PhD, Associate Professor in the Division of Preventive Medicine, Gabrielle Rocque, MD, Assistant Professor in Hematology and Oncology, and their colleagues at the University of Alabama at Birmingham surveyed 1457 adults aged 65 years or older. Most of the respondents were not actively receiving cancer treatment at the time of the survey and were one year or more past their diagnosis. The survey explored factors in physical, psychological, social, and spiritual domains that could impact quality of life.

The researchers found that the physical and mental components of quality of life were likely affected by factors across different domains. The most important contributors associated with worse physical quality of life included more severe symptoms of pain, fatigue, and disturbed sleep in the week leading up to the survey, as well as other medical conditions that patients had besides cancer. Also important were social domain factors related to support needs, such as needing help when fatigued. Being physically active appeared to be an important contributor to better physical quality of life. The most important contributors linked with worse mental quality of life were again the severity of symptoms such as fatigue and disturbed sleep. Other likely contributors included the need for emotional support and having financial hardship events.

“Quality of life studies tend to focus on one cancer at a time, on the period during treatment, and on specific cancer drugs or treatments; however, as people live longer after a cancer diagnosis, it is important to understand the contribution of other factors to quality of life regardless of cancer type or treatment,” said Dr. Pisu. “Cancer type and treatment received were not among the most important factors affecting quality of life in our group of survivors.”

Dr. Pisu noted that the contribution of financial hardship to the mental component of quality of life was somewhat unexpected. “Financial and economic hardships have usually been found to be less concerning for older adults,” she said.

The study’s results have implications for the care of older cancer survivors. “The approach to care for this population has to be one of comprehensive health promotion that includes appropriate management of symptoms and comorbid conditions and the promotion of healthy lifestyles,” said Dr. Pisu. “Moreover, their care should recognize the importance of older survivors’ social contexts and the support needs that they may have, including those related to financial challenges.”

Additional Information

NOTE: The information contained in this release is protected by copyright. Please include journal attribution in all coverage.

Full Citation: "Most Impactful Factors on the Health-Related Quality of Life of a Geriatric Population with Cancer.” Maria Pisu, Andres
Azuero, Karina I. Halilova, Courtney P. Williams, Kelly M. Kenzik, Elizabeth A. Kvale, Grant R. Williams, Karen Meneses, Margaret Sullivan, Supriya Kumar Yagnik, Hans-Peter Goertz, and Gabrielle B. Rocque. *CANCER*, Published Online: December 18, 2017 (DOI: 10.1002/cncr.31048).


Author Contact: Susan Driggers at sdriggers@uabmc.edu or Beena Thannickal at beenat@uab.edu.

About the Journal
*CANCER* is a peer-reviewed publication of the American Cancer Society integrating scientific information from worldwide sources for all oncologic specialties. The objective of *CANCER* is to provide an interdisciplinary forum for the exchange of information among oncologic disciplines concerned with the etiology, course, and treatment of human cancer. *CANCER* is published on behalf of the American Cancer Society by Wiley and can be accessed online at [http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/cancer](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/cancer).

Follow us on Twitter [@JournalCancer](https://twitter.com/ACSJournals) and Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/ACSJournals](https://www.facebook.com/ACSJournals)

About Wiley
Wiley, a global research and learning company, helps people and organizations develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Our online scientific, technical, medical, and scholarly journals, combined with our digital learning, assessment and certification solutions help universities, learned societies, businesses, governments and individuals increase the academic and professional impact of their work. For more than 210 years, we have delivered consistent performance to our stakeholders. The company's website can be accessed at [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

Language: English