Sexual Minority Cancer Survivors Face Disparities in Access to Care and Quality of Life

Release Date:
Monday, May 20, 2019 12:01 am EDT

Terms:
Cancer All Journals and Research Health Sciences

Dateline City:
Hoboken, NJ

Contacts:
Penny Smith +44 (0) 1243 770448 (UK) newsroom@wiley.com

CANCER News Alert

Embargo/Online Publication Date: 00:01 Hours ET, Monday, May 20, 2019 [05.01 Hours UK Time (BST)/14:01 Hours Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST)]

Results from a study published early online in CANCER, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, point to the need for improved access to medical care for sexual minority cancer survivors, in particular female survivors.

Results from a study published early online in CANCER, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, point to the need for improved access to medical care for sexual minority cancer survivors, in particular female survivors. In female cancer survivors, poor access to care is more strongly related to poor quality of life among sexual minorities compared with heterosexuals.

Access to quality medical care is critical to the long-term health and well-being of cancer survivors. Evidence from non-cancer–related studies indicates that sexual minorities—including lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other non-heterosexual identified individuals—have worse access to care, but previous studies have not examined the issue among cancer survivors.

To assess sexual minority cancer survivors’ access to care and their quality of life, Boston University School of Public Health’s Ulrike Boehmer, PhD, and Jessica Gereige, MD, along with their colleagues, examined four years of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey data on U.S. men and women who reported a history of cancer. Among the 70,524 cancer survivors, 1,931 identified themselves as sexual minorities.

“While we have extensive cancer surveillance in the U.S., sexual minority cancer survivors are excluded from surveillance, which means we have very limited information about this group. This study therefore provides much needed information about sexual minority cancer survivors,” said Dr. Gereige.

Compared with heterosexual women, sexual minority women were more likely to report having no health insurance, being without a personal physician, avoiding medical care due to costs, and being without an annual medical visit. Among men, sexual minority men were more likely to avoid medical care due to costs, but men of all sexual orientations had similar access to care with respect to insurance status, having a personal physician, and annual visits.

Sexual minority women’s access to care had a stronger association with three quality of life measures compared with heterosexual women. Specifically, deficits in access to care were linked with a greater likelihood of poor physical quality of life, poor mental quality of life, and difficulty concentrating among sexual minority women compared with heterosexual women. In men, deficits in access to care were linked with a higher likelihood of difficulty concentrating among sexual minorities than heterosexuals. Also, sexual minority status increased the likelihood of poor mental quality of life in men.

“Our study shows that sexual minority women suffer from poor access to care and that this is linked to worse quality of life. Since poor quality of life is linked to worse cancer survival rates, this calls for policy changes to improve access to care for sexual minority cancer survivors,” said Dr. Boehmer. “The study’s findings also point to an opportunity for clinicians to address difficulties in access to care with patients during treatment discussions, or at the completion of cancer therapy and during follow up visits. Clinicians who are aware of these disparities and address them during clinic visits may have an impact on sexual minority women's survival rates, which are lower than their heterosexual counterparts’ rates.”

Additional Information

NOTE: The information contained in this release is protected by copyright. Please include journal attribution in all coverage. A free
abstract of this article will be available via the Cancer News Room upon online publication. For more information or to obtain a PDF of any study, please contact:

Penny Smith  +44 (0) 1243 770448 (UK)
newsroom@wiley.com
Follow us on Twitter @WileyNews

Full Citation:

“Cancer survivors’ access to care and quality of life: Do sexual minorities fare worse than heterosexuals?” Ulrike Boehmer, Jessica Gereige, Michael Winter, and Al Ozonoff. CANCER; Published Online: May 20, 2019 (DOI: 10.1002/cncr.32151).

URL Upon Publication:  http://doi.wiley.com/10.1002/cncr.32151

Author Contact: Meaghan Agnew, Boston University School of Public Health’s Director of Editorial and Media Relations, at meaghans@bu.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.

Follow us on Twitter @JournalCancer

About Wiley

Wiley is a global leader in research and education. Our online scientific, technical, medical, and scholarly journals, and our digital learning, assessment, certification and student-lifecycle services and solutions help universities, academic societies, businesses, governments and individuals to achieve their academic and professional goals. For more than 200 years, we have delivered consistent performance to our stakeholders. The Company's website can be accessed at www.wiley.com.

Language: English