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The importance of the survivorship care plans for cancer in primary care

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Background & Aim: For cancer survivors, healthcare needs include surveillance for recurrence, screening of secondary cancers, monitoring for the long-term physical and psychological effects of cancer, management of comorbid medical conditions and preventive measures in primary care. The aim of this work is to review the guidelines of National Comprehensive Cancer Network for the most common cancer types among survivors (breast, prostate and colon or rectum cancer, melanoma, Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphomas, acute leukemia).

Method: This work is based in a literature review using the term “cancer survivor follow-up” and “cancer survivorship” carried out using textbooks, published review articles in scientific databases and clinical standards websites.

Results: The number of individuals diagnosed with cancer has increased dramatically. Most cancer survivors are older individuals. Only 5 percent are younger than age 40, although this is a growing part of the population of cancer survivors. Following the initial treatment, more than 60 percent of adults diagnosed with cancer are expected to become long-term cancer survivors, living five years or more following diagnosis. A committee established at the Institute of Medicine identified the components of survivorship care for patients who have completed primary therapy: 1-Prevention of recurrent and new cancers, and other late effects; 2-Surveillance for cancer spread, recurrence, or second cancers; 3-Assessment of medical and psychosocial late effects; 4-Intervention for consequences of cancer and its treatment; 5-Evaluation of concerns related to employment, insurance, and disability; 6-Coordination between primary and secondary care.

Conclusions: A number of models for cancer survivorship care have been described. The follow-up of cancer survivors can be shared among the primary care provider, medical oncologist and other specialists. Coordination with primary care, particularly for prevention, management of comorbid medical conditions, and psychosocial care may be helpful. Survivorship care plans are a tool to communicate and guide survivorship care.