

Closing the Gaps: Addressing the Unmet Needs of Cancer Survivors

Debra E. Locker, RN, BSN, Kathleen Shannon-Dorcy, PhD, RN, FAAN, Emily Jo Rajotte, MPH, and Joli Bartell, BA

Moving Beyond Cancer to Wellness is a patient- and caregiver-focused educational outreach event with an inspirational message and lectures that address common concerns among cancer survivors. This event is open to the community and offers a keynote speaker, breakout sessions on specific survivorship topics, and a patient panel. This typically in-person event was held virtually in 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but returned to the in-person format in 2022. As demonstrated by consistently strong attendance and high satisfaction results, this community-based educational event has been successful in communicating survivorship information to cancer survivors and their families.

AT A GLANCE

- As the number of cancer survivors in the United States increases, the healthcare community needs to do more to support cancer survivors and their families.
- Patients with cancer and their caregivers and families are in need of education on the variety of late and long-term effects after treatment ends.
- The Moving Beyond Cancer to Wellness community-based educational event is well attended by cancer survivors and is successful in promoting wellness and empowerment after cancer.

KEYWORDS

cancer survivor; education; late effects; long-term effects

DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER

10.1188/24.CJON.241-246

Most people diagnosed with cancer will become long-term survivors. About 69% of adult patients with cancer and 84% of pediatric patients with cancer are expected to live at least five years postdiagnosis (American Cancer Society, 2022). As of January 2022, there were about 18.1 million cancer survivors in the United States, which is estimated to grow to 25.5 million by 2032 (American Cancer Society, 2022). As a result, some cancers are considered chronic diseases, and survivors' physical functioning and psychological well-being are important aspects of public health. Although cured from cancer, many survivors who have completed their medical treatments face distressing physical and psychosocial problems as a result of their illnesses and treatments (Emery et al., 2022; Stein et al., 2008; Tonorezos et al., 2022). These physical difficulties and psychosocial problems may hinder cancer survivors' return to their normal lives (Grusdat et al., 2022; Lisy et al., 2019; Schilstra et al., 2021; Syrjala et al., 2010), illustrating the need for interventions within this population.

The National Academy of Medicine's seminal report *From Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Transition* (Hewitt et al., 2006) clearly outlined recommendations to address the issues cancer survivors face as they complete cancer treatment. The National Academy of Medicine aimed to raise awareness of the long-term and late consequences of cancer and cancer therapies in the healthcare community.

Recognizing that cancer survivors face many obstacles from the time of diagnosis and beyond, the Livestrong Foundation fielded surveys revealing that cancer survivors live with physical and emotional late effects of cancer and therapies (Rechis et al., 2010). In 2020, the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship (2020) conducted a State of Cancer Survivorship Survey with a broad, national sample of more than 1,300 survivors in the United States, providing additional evidence that cancer survivors face significant challenges during and after treatment. The persistent, undeniable, and unmet needs of cancer survivors provide strong evidence to support the development and implementation of programs to meet the needs of this vulnerable population.

As a member of the Livestrong Survivorship Centers of Excellence Network, in 2006 the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center (Fred Hutch) hosted the Fred Hutch Cancer Center Survivorship Program (Fred Hutch Survivorship Program) to participate in the nationwide effort to help survivors and their healthcare providers understand, prevent, and manage the