Increasing Number of Cancer Survivors

- 11.7 million people (2007 CDC)
- Due to earlier detection, improved therapies, effective medical management, and increasing age of the population.
- Important to characterize the type and frequency of medical care utilized by cancer survivors in order to meet health needs and curb increasing healthcare costs.

Defining Cancer Survivorship

- Lack of a consistent definition in literature
- Important to define a growing patient population that is actively being studied
- Need to standardize the definition for research studies.

Background

- Systematic literature review to determine a definition of cancer survivorship that could be used in this study
- MESH terms and key phrases: Cancer survivor, cancer survivorship, especially in health services research studies – ED utilization, mood disorders
- Reviewed definitions used by studies that included cancer survivors as a study population.

Methods

- Categorized variable definitions used in different studies
- Computed frequencies for different definition categories

Results

- Cancer Survivorship Definition: Number of studies using this definition
- After diagnosis: 5
- 1 year post diagnosis: 12
- 2 years post diagnosis: 1
- ≥ 5 years post diagnosis: 1
- Short term: <5 years post diagnosis, long-term 5-10 years post diagnosis: 1

Descriptive Analysis

- Studies use a wide range of definitions that are most appropriate for them.
- The most used operational definition for cancer survivorship was ≥5 years post diagnosis.
- Based on the results, the use of a standard definition of ≥5 years post diagnosis should be used to define cancer survivorship to allow enough time for treatment and acute complications.

Limitations

- These findings suggest that researchers use a definition of cancer survivorship that is appropriate for their study but that ≥5 years post diagnosis was the most used definition.
- Due to this variability, a definition of ≥5 years post diagnosis should be used as the standard definition and the methods section should include a clear explanation of their specific definition.

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References