

Patients Who Receive a Treatment Summary Post-Cancer Report Better Quality of Care and Communication With Providers

Introduction

There are now more than 14.5 million cancer survivors in the U.S. This group represents about 4 percent of the population. By 2024, there will be an estimated 19 million survivors. For these millions of people, post-cancer care—also called survivorship care—is a crucial part of their continued physical and psychological well-being. However, survivorship care for cancer survivors is complex and requires strong patient-centered communication. Primary care providers are often improperly trained in post-cancer care, evidence-based standards for survivorship have not been fully developed, and oncologists do not typically communicate directly with primary care providers.

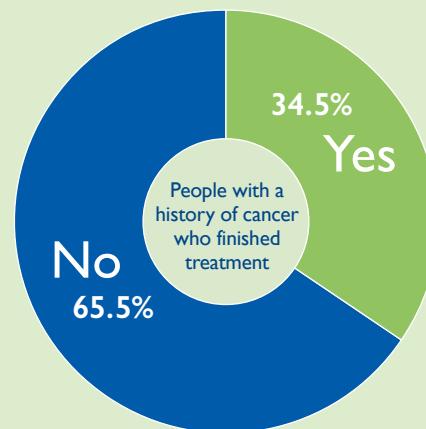
To ease the transition from patient to survivor, organizations such as the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) recommend that cancer survivors receive survivorship care plans when their treatments are complete. Care plans should contain a review of every step of the person's treatment, including information about the tumor and a review of the diagnostics, interventions, and supportive services provided. Contact information for all health care providers and care coordinators should also be included so that future health care professionals can ask questions or gather additional information.

The Academy made these recommendations a decade ago, yet data indicate that the majority of cancer survivors do not receive any type of survivorship care planning. The American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer added survivorship care plans to its list of 2016 cancer center accreditation requirements.

Quick Facts

- The National Academy of Medicine recommends that all cancer survivors receive treatment summaries once their treatments are complete.
- A treatment summary gives the cancer survivor's current and future health care providers a snapshot of all the treatments the survivor received. The information promotes communication and care coordination, especially for patients with complex cancer histories.
- Just over one-third of cancer survivors who responded to HINTS in 2012-13 reported receiving a post-treatment cancer care summary.
- People who had more than two cancer treatments were more than twice as likely to receive a treatment summary as people who received one or two treatments.

Did you ever receive a summary document from your doctor or other health care professional that listed all of the treatments you received for your cancer?



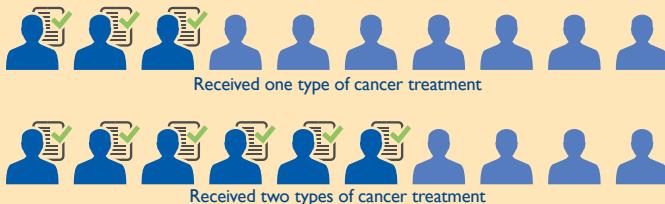
Source: http://hints.cancer.gov/question-details.aspx?PK_Cycle=5&qid=1328

In this HINTS Brief, we examine whether receiving a survivorship care plan or treatment summary influenced patients' perceived quality of care and satisfaction with patient-provider communication.

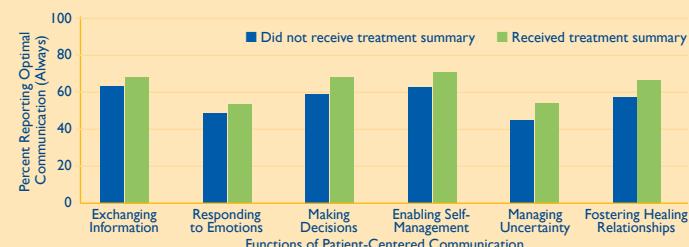
Several Aspects of Communication are Better for Those Who Received Treatment Plans

In a recently published study using HINTS data, investigators found that survivors who received a treatment summary were three times more likely to report excellent or very good care compared to survivors who did not receive a summary. When asked about their overall experiences, survivors were likely to report high overall patient-centered communication. And those who received a treatment summary were significantly more likely to report better overall communication.

In addition to examining overall satisfaction with care, the researchers also analyzed responses to six specific questions about patient-centered communication. These questions asked respondents about the provider's ability to exchange information, respond to emotions, make collaborative decisions, enable self-management, help patients manage uncertainty, and foster healing relationships. Communication in this area was suboptimal for between a third and a half of respondents. However, people who received a treatment summary reported significantly better communication in five of the six areas. For example, people who received a treatment summary were nearly twice as likely to report that their health care provider helped them manage uncertainty, make decisions, and exchange information. The only aspect not significantly correlated to receiving a treatment summary was a health care provider's ability to respond to emotions.



People who received more than two types of cancer treatments were more than twice as likely to receive a treatment summary. No other demographic or clinical characteristics were associated with receiving a treatment summary.



Comparison of patient-centered communication for people who received a treatment summary or not.
Source: See reference #1 below

How Can This Inform Your Work?

Cancer survivors are often not getting the information they need to ensure they receive appropriate long-term, cancer-related care. Providing survivors with treatment summaries should be a goal for every cancer care provider.

Care coordinators at clinics and hospitals should work with staff to develop a protocol for delivering summaries to patients. Oncologists and surgeons should be included in the discussion. Additionally, treatment summaries should be viewed as more than just a document to be passed off. Providers should take the opportunity to review them, discuss next steps with patients, and allow time for questions.

Receiving a treatment plan should become an expectation for every patient, and providing that summary should become the responsibility of all providers involved in a patient's cancer care.

About HINTS

hints.cancer.gov

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) created the Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS) to monitor changes in the rapidly evolving field of health communication. The survey data can be used to understand how adults use communication channels to obtain health information for themselves and their loved ones. It can also help practitioners create more effective health communication strategies.

NCI fielded the first HINTS survey in 2002–03 and surveyed 6,369 Americans. Subsequent surveys followed in 2005 (5,586 Americans surveyed), 2008 (7,674 Americans surveyed), 2011 (3,959 Americans surveyed), 2012 (3,630 Americans surveyed), 2013 (3,185 Americans surveyed), and 2014 (3,677 Americans surveyed).

HINTS Briefs provide a snapshot of noteworthy, data-driven research findings. They introduce population-level estimates for specific questions in the survey and summarize significant research findings resulting from analyses of how certain demographic characteristics influence specific outcomes. Many Briefs summarize research findings from recent peer-reviewed journal articles that have used HINTS data.

For More Information on Cancer

- Call the NCI Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER
- Visit <http://cancer.gov>
- Order NCI publications at <https://pubs.cancer.gov/ncipl/home.aspx>
- Visit [Facebook.com/cancer.gov](https://www.facebook.com/cancer.gov) and [http://www.youtube.com/ncigov](https://www.youtube.com/ncigov)

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