

Lown EA, Goldsby R, Mertens AC, Greenfield T, Bond J, Whitton J, Korcha R, Robison LL, Zeltzer LK. "Alcohol consumption patterns and risk factors among childhood cancer survivors compared to siblings and general population peers" Poster Presentation. American Psycho-oncology Society Conference, Austin, TX, March 2007

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study describes alcohol consumption patterns among long-term survivors of pediatric cancer compared to sibling controls and a national sample of healthy peers, and evaluates general and cancer-related risk factors for heavy drinking among survivors. **Methods:** Data were collected from adult survivors of pediatric cancer (N=10,398), sibling controls (n=3,034) and peers (n=4,774) from a population-based survey. **Results:** Controlling for demographic variables, survivors, compared to peers, were more likely to be current drinkers (OR_{adj}=1.2; 95% CI, 1.1-1.3) and to drink above conservative low risk drinking guidelines (OR_{adj}=1.1; 95% CI, 1.0-1.2). Higher risk and heavy drinking practices were comparable to their peers. Survivors were less likely to be current drinkers, risky drinkers and heavy drinkers compared to siblings in multivariate analyses. Survivors and peers showed similar risk factors for heavy drinking. Among survivors, significant risk factors for heavy drinking included being young (OR_{adj}=2.0), male (OR_{adj}=2.1), having less than a high school education (OR_{adj}=3.4) and drinking initiation at a young age (OR_{adj}=6.9). Early initiation of drinking is a significantly stronger predictor of later heavy drinking for survivors compared to peers. Among survivors, symptoms of depression, anxiety, or somatization, activity limitations and anxiety about cancer were associated with significantly higher risk for heavy drinking. **Conclusions:** Adult survivors of childhood cancer exhibit similar risky and heavy drinking practices compared to their peers, despite their more vulnerable health status and higher risk for secondary malignancies and other complications. **Research Implications:** Further studies should explore the health implications for alcohol consumption among survivors. **Clinical Implications:** Screening for alcohol consumption should be initiated among adolescent survivors and in long-term follow-up settings. Interventions among adolescents should be established to reduce risk for early drinking among survivors and provide education for those most at risk.

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