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Activity: Abstract Submission

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Prevalence and predictors of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in adult survivors of childhood cancer: a report from the Childhood Cancer Survivor Study

Author Block: M. Stuber, K. Meeske, B. Zebrack, K. Krull, K. Stratton, W. Leisenring, L. Robison, L. Zeltzer; UCLA, Los Angeles, CA; Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis, TN; Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center, Seattle, WA; UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

Abstract:

Background:

This study examined prevalence and demographic and disease-related correlates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among 6,542 adult childhood cancer survivors and 368 siblings from the Childhood Cancer Survivor Study.

Methods:

Subjects were dichotomized based on full PTSD criteria, using the Foa PTSD Self-report measure to assess posttraumatic stress symptoms of intrusion of unwanted memories, avoidance of event reminders, and increased startle response, and the Brief Symptom Inventory - 18 and the SF-36 subscale, role limitation due to emotional health, to evaluate clinical distress or impaired function. A self-report questionnaire provided demographic information and medical abstraction provided cancer/treatment data. Multivariable generalized linear models were used to compare prevalence of PTSD among cancer survivors to siblings and to examine relationships between PTSD and demographic and disease-related factors. Relative risks (RR) were calculated based on a Poisson distribution with robust error variances.

Results:

589 (9%) childhood cancer survivors and 8 (2%) siblings met criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD (RR= 3.83, 95% CI 1.96-7.48, $p<0.0001$). Among cancer survivors, there was significantly more PTSD reported by women from minority backgrounds ($p<0.05$). Other demographic factors associated with PTSD were having less than a college education ($p<0.05$), being unmarried ($p<0.001$), having an annual income less than \$20,000 ($p<0.05$) and being unemployed ($p=0.001$). Risk of PTSD was significantly higher for survivors diagnosed at ages 15 to 20 years ($p<0.05$). PTSD was more common among survivors treated with intensive chemotherapy ($p<0.05$) or radiation therapy ($p<0.001$) and who relapsed or developed a second malignant neoplasm ($p<0.001$). Neuroblastoma and Wilms tumor survivors had a significantly lower risk of PTSD than did leukemia survivors ($p<0.05$).

Conclusions:

While the majority of childhood cancer survivors did not demonstrate PTSD, a clinically significant number did meet diagnostic criteria. Prospective assessment of survivors with high risk demographic-, diagnosis- and treatment-related characteristics should be considered as part of long-term health screening.

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Author Disclosure Information: M. Stuber, None; K. Meeske, None; B. Zebrack, None; K. Krull,

None; **K. Stratton**, None; **W. Leisenring**, None; **L. Robison**, None; **L. Zeltzer**, None.

Topic Category (Complete): Other: Pediatric Cancer

Keyword (Complete): pediatric cancer ; survivorship ; psychologic distress

Sponsor (Complete):

Additional Information I (Complete):

Type of Trial: Quality of Life

Research Category: Clinical

Trial Accrual: No

Funding: National Institutes of Health

Funder Name: : National Cancer Institute

Grant Funding: No

Type of Grant: Not Applicable

Additional Information II (Complete):

Trial Participants over the age of 65: No

I Agree to ASCO Abstract Policies: Yes

I Agree to Present: Yes

Abstract selected for presentation at the 2009 Gastrointestinal Cancers Symposium: No

Abstract selected for presentation at the 2009 Genitourinary Cancers Symposium: No

Abstract presented at the 2008 Breast Cancer Symposium: No

Merit Award: No

Late Breaking (Complete):

I intend to submit a late-breaking abstract: No

Attached Files:

No Files Attached

Status: Complete

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