Survivorship care planning is associated with breast cancer survivors' reported quality and coordination of care
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BACKGROUND

A 2006 Institute of Medicine Report1 indicated that many cancer patients are “lost in transition” at the completion of adjuvant therapy. The report recommended that “Patients completing primary treatment should be provided with a comprehensive care summary and follow-up plan that is clearly and effectively explained.” Survivorship care planning (SCP) aims to improve communication and coordination between survivors, health-care, and supportive care providers. Results on the effectiveness of SCP have been mixed. Observational studies have shown benefits are associated with the use of survivorship care plans, but randomized clinical trials have so far shown no efficacy.

We report on the relationship between self-reported indicators of care with two essential elements of SCP: receipt of a written treatment summary and written instructions for routine cancer check-ups.

METHODS

The Greater Plains Collaborative (GPC) Clinical Data Research Network2 conducted the Share Thoughts on Breast Cancer survey across 8 Midwestern cancer-care delivery sites (see figure).

Participants were 1,148 women age 18 years and older who had completed treatment for Stage 0-3 breast cancer diagnosed from 1/1/2013 to 5/1/2014. Exclusion criteria: diagnosed with lobular carcinoma in situ, had previously been diagnosed with cancer per tumor registry records, did not report having cancer-directed surgery, or did not respond to questions about survivorship care planning.

Logistic regression was used to examine characteristics and outcomes associated with a three-category SCP summary variable:

- (a) received both a written treatment summary and instructions for follow-up care
- (b) received only one of these elements; or
- (c) received neither element.

Potential relationships between SCP and socioeconomic and clinical characteristics were examined, including age at diagnosis, race, marital status at diagnosis, education, history of smoking, number of comorbidities, type of surgery, and treatment with chemotherapy, radiation or hormones, and practice site.

RESULTS

- Of the 1,148 survivors meeting study criteria, 485 (42.2%), 420 (36.6%), and 243 (21.2%) reporting receiving both SCP elements, one element, or no element, respectively.
- Younger adults were less likely to receive SCP. No other socioeconomic or clinical characteristics were associated with SCP.
- Of survivors who received both SCP elements:
  - 71% reported having one health professional who coordinated their cancer care, compared to 52% who received neither SCP element;
  - 88% reported excellent/very good quality of care compared to 73% who received neither element; and
  - 69% reported knowing to ask cancer-related questions compared to 37% who received neither element (all comparisons, p < .05, controlling for age at diagnosis).

TABLE – Receipt of survivorship care planning and coordination/quality of care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Neither (N=243 (21.2%))</th>
<th>One Element (N=420 (36.6%))</th>
<th>Both Elements (N=485 (42.2%))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age at Diagnosis (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td>56.4 (11.8)</td>
<td>59.1 (12.2)</td>
<td>58.5 (12.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During your cancer treatment, was there one health professional who COORDINATED your cancer care?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>126 (52.3)</td>
<td>247 (59.5)</td>
<td>340 (70.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No/Don’t Know</td>
<td></td>
<td>115 (47.7)</td>
<td>168 (40.5)</td>
<td>142 (29.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how would you rate the quality of your health care since you found out you had breast cancer?</td>
<td>Excellent/Very Good</td>
<td>177 (73.4)</td>
<td>337 (81.0)</td>
<td>427 (88.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/Fair/Poor</td>
<td></td>
<td>64 (26.6)</td>
<td>79 (19.0)</td>
<td>57 (11.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often did you know who to ask when you had any questions related to your breast cancer or its treatment?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>90 (37.0)</td>
<td>250 (60.1)</td>
<td>334 (69.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never/Sometimes/ Usually</td>
<td></td>
<td>153 (63.0)</td>
<td>166 (39.9)</td>
<td>150 (31.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationships between all variables and number of SCP elements were significant, p < .05. Categorical variables were controlled for age at diagnosis which was the only characteristic associated with SCP.

CONCLUSIONS

- A significant proportion of breast cancer survivors (79%) indicated receiving at least one of the SCP elements, indicating that most patients perceive that they’re receiving the essential aspects of SCP.
- When breast cancer survivors receive SCP, they also experience high quality, coordinated care.
  - Breast cancer survivors who reported receiving written summary of care and instructions for follow-up also reported better quality of care. They were also more confident about how to find answers to cancer related questions.
  - Survivors who receive SCP were also more likely to report having a single health professional coordinating their cancer care.

REFERENCES


SUPPORT

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