

Adolescent Cancer Survivors' and their Mothers' Perceptions of Vulnerabilities, Health Status, Treatment Effects, and Roles and Health-related Behaviors

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Abstract: This qualitative descriptive study, among adolescent cancer survivors and their mothers, sought to explore the meaning of the adolescents' and their mothers': vulnerability to cancer recurrence; vulnerability to adverse late-effects of cancer treatment; views of current health status; views on treatment effects; and, roles and health-related behaviors. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted with 12 adolescent-mother dyads who were attending follow-up care at a tertiary oncology care setting in Bangkok, Thailand. Data were assessed using content analysis.

Within perceived vulnerability to cancer recurrence, the adolescent-mother dyads described this theme in terms of: perceived risk; cancer-related beliefs; and, signs of recurrence. The second theme, perceived vulnerability to late-effects of cancer treatment, was presented in terms of potential major organ damage and signs of late effects of cancer treatment, while views of current health status, the third theme, was defined in terms of vulnerable health, and better or good health. Views of treatment effects on health, the fourth theme, was defined by the adolescent-mother dyads as physical, psychological, and cognitive functioning. The fifth theme, roles and health-related behaviors, was the only theme described slightly different between the adolescents and their mothers. The adolescents defined roles and behaviors as: staying healthy; protecting health; dealing with facilitators and barriers to staying healthy; and, self-care. Their mothers, however, perceived roles and behaviors as promoting and protecting the adolescents' health, and their own parenting behaviors. The findings provide a better understanding of adolescent cancer survivors and their mothers' perceptions, roles, and health-related behaviors, and how they can be incorporated into nursing practice to enhance the development of interventions to protect the health of adolescent survivors of childhood cancer.

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Key Words: Perceived Vulnerability; Adolescent Survivors; Childhood Cancer; Health-Related Behaviors

Background

As a result of the synergetic effects of multimodality cancer treatment and subsequent damage to various organs, adolescent survivors of childhood cancer, generally, are not as healthy as other adolescents.¹ Compared to their siblings, such adolescents tend to have more functional impairment,

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