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Returning to life after treatment end: quality of life in survivors of osteosarcoma of developmental age

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Background

Tumors in developmental age can bring psychological development and quality of life issues. Typically osteosarcoma affects mainly adolescents at a critical stage of their mental and physical growth. When treatment ends, eventual psychosocial problems related to the experience of illness and its sequelae may remain undetected. Clinical experience suggests that some surviving patients missing important evolutive stages (i.e. relationships, working identity, planning future). Others, on the contrary, can achieve adequate adaptation level and even demonstrate a greater strength than healthy peers in proposing high goals. The factors predicting the variability of outcome are still unclear. The personality, that defines the psychological and behavioral variability between people, is stable throughout life and can be a useful indicator of long-term functioning.

This study aims to assess the quality of life and the personality features in surviving patients treated for childhood osteosarcoma.

Methods

The study enrolled patients treated at the pediatric oncology unit of the Fondazione IRCCS National Cancer Institute and Pini Hospital in Milan. Patients were at least eighteen years old and had completed treatment at least from five years. Data collection begun in September 2011. The following self-report questionnaires were delivered during the follow-up visits or sent by mail: TESS, SF-36, QOL-CS, Big Five Questionnaire, SCL-90.

Results

Until now, 19 questionnaires were completed. Results highlight that quality of life is general adequate, but 5 (26%) of these guys have dropped out of school or do not yet have a job, 3 patients were followed over the years in a course of psychotherapy and a girl, after the completion of the questionnaire, asked us psychological support.

Conclusion

The long-term adjustment of cancer survivors is an important area of clinical intervention. Preliminary results suggest that in some cases a normal life return can be complicated. Quality of life should be evaluated during follow-up to identify situations may need a support/intervention.

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