

# The Experiences of Young Adults With Hodgkin Lymphoma Transitioning to Survivorship: A Grounded Theory Study

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Submitted November 2015. Accepted for publication January 21, 2016.

Key words: young adults; cancer survivors; qualitative; grounded theory; Hodgkin lymphoma

ONF, 43(5), E195-E204.

doi: 10.1188/16.ONF.E195-E204

**Purpose/Objectives:** To explore the experiences of young adults with Hodgkin lymphoma during the first year following the end of initial treatment.

**Research Approach:** A qualitative grounded theory study.

**Setting:** Interviews with patients recruited from three cancer centers in England.

**Participants:** 10 Hodgkin lymphoma survivors (four men and six women aged 21–39 years) recruited as part of a larger study of 28 young adult cancer survivors.

**Methodologic Approach:** Semistructured interviews were conducted about two months after treatment completion, and follow-up interviews were conducted seven months later. The authors' grounded theory of positive psychosocial adjustment to cancer provided the conceptual framework.

**Findings:** Positive reframing, informal peer support, acceptance, and normalization helped young adults dismantle the threats of Hodgkin lymphoma during the course of treatment. However, they described losing a sense of security following treatment completion. Greater age-specific information to enable better preparation for the future was desired regarding body image, fertility, sexual relationships, work, and socializing.

**Conclusions:** Informal support mechanisms, like peer support and patient navigator interventions, may be useful ways to further support young adults after treatment completion.

**Interpretation:** Positive psychosocial adjustment to cancer survivorship in young adults is facilitated by having informal peer support; being able to positively reframe, accept, and normalize their experience; and being prepared for the future.

Young adult cancer survivors have unique experiences, needs, and challenges dependent on their age and diagnosis (Hall et al., 2012; Zebrack, 2009; Zebrack & Isaacson, 2012). Cancer can disrupt normal life stages, such as finding a partner, establishing independence, finishing education, starting a family, and gaining employment (Grinyer, 2009; Zebrack, 2011). Young adult cancer survivors may also have specific concerns and needs regarding appearance and body image, identity development, and long-term future health (Bellizzi et al., 2012; Kelly & Gibson, 2008; Zebrack, 2011; Zebrack & Isaacson, 2012). Greater levels of psychological distress have been shown in young adult survivors compared to older survivors (Costanzo et al., 2007; Costanzo, Ryff, & Singer, 2009; Kwak et al., 2013; Parker, Baile, de Moor, & Cohen, 2003); therefore, young adults require specific interventions from the oncology nurse (Adams et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2012; Zebrack, 2009; Zebrack & Isaacson, 2012).

The transition from initial treatment completion—commonly a course of 4–6 monthly cycles of cytotoxic chemotherapy treatment—to follow-up care can be