

# Survivorship: Beyond Transition

## Community Cancer Centers' role in comprehensive survivorship care

BY RICHARD B. REILING, MD, FACS

Survivorship care is an established element of comprehensive cancer care. And yet, as the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) 2005 report, *From Cancer Patient to Survivor: Lost in Transition*, made evident, shortfalls exist in the care currently being provided to the nation's growing population of cancer survivors. (Today, the number of cancer survivors in this country is estimated at more than 10 million.) The IOM report is a mandate rather than a suggestion to consider the needs of all survivors. In my President's column in this issue (see page 5), I speak from my own experience as a cancer survivor. Despite being a well-informed, knowledgeable physician, I faced the same survivorship issues all cancer patients confront.

A survey currently being discussed in the Advisory Board's Oncology Roundtable indicates only a "middle level" of interest in survivorship issues. But, in my opinion, the question was not adequately explained to those being surveyed. Much attention was given to the concept of cancer navigation—certainly one important aspect of survivorship. Most survey respondents rated the concept of navigation in the range of "Need to Have." Survivorship, however, encompasses *all* aspects of cancer care from the day of diagnosis and going forward for the rest of the patient's life.

ACoS' Commission on Cancer has traditionally included the concept of survivorship in its standards. As a surveyor for the Commission, I rarely saw programs that included more than something along the lines of the American Cancer Society's "I Can Cope" program. Most of the time, eyes glazed over when the question was broached during the survey. As the IOM's mandate makes clear, we need to take our programs much farther along the cancer journey to include appropriate, comprehensive survivorship care.

While it is not possible for programs to totally encompass all aspects of survivorship covered in the IOM report, most of our cancer centers today have various elements that would contribute to a comprehensive survivorship effort. For community cancer centers, the process of developing a quality survivorship program would fit very well into the Cancer Committee requirements for quality improvement projects. But even more than meeting a requirement, quality survivorship care is

the right thing to do—cancer programs cannot afford *not* to address this issue.

At my community hospital in Charlotte, North Carolina, we have a team whose main project is focused on survivorship. Our ancillary associates, including our social workers, nutritionists, outreach staff, and others, have brought together all the aspects of our program that relate to survivorship and are working out a preliminary plan that will lead, eventually, to a fully comprehensive program. We have found that our supportive care staff is excited about working on survivorship projects that benefit our patients. (Look for an upcoming article in *Oncology Issues*, "Strides to Strength," about our program for cancer fatigue.)

This year at ACCC, one of the issues we will focus on is developing simple projects or programs for our community cancer centers to begin or to augment their existing survivorship efforts. For example, we would like to explore the possibility of developing template form(s), most likely cancer specific, which would be completed and given to patients with directions for follow-up after their initial treatment.

As the oncology community mobilizes to meet the challenges of providing "appropriate" survivorship care, ACCC will provide many opportunities for community-based programs to learn from each other in defining, developing, and enhancing quality survivorship programs. The following articles from three ACCC-member institutions highlight distinct survivorship efforts already well underway. The article from the City of Hope National Medical Center in Duarte, Calif., describes a NCI-grant-supported Survivorship Education for Quality Cancer Care program, which was initiated in 2006 and will include one course annually for four years. The article by Alison Faust, RN, ND, discusses University of Colorado Cancer Center's LIVESTRONG™ Survivorship Center of Excellence, and additional survivorship-related initiatives underway at this NCI-designated cancer center. Finally, from Christiana Care in Newark, Del., is an article describing the Helen F. Graham Cancer Center's three-pronged approach to providing comprehensive survivorship care. 📖

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