Report Outlines Priorities to Improve the Lives of Cancer Survivors and Caregivers

Growing number of cancer survivors demands better coordinated efforts

Growing numbers of cancer survivors, provider shortages, rising health care costs, and socio-economic disparities in health outcomes have created an urgent need to provide coordinated, comprehensive, personalized care for cancer survivors. Now a new report from the American Cancer Society creates a set of critical priorities for care delivery, research, education, and policy to equitably improve survivor outcomes and support caregivers. The report, appearing in *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, marks the latest installment in the ACS's blueprint for cancer control.

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More than 1.7 million Americans are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in 2018, a number that continues to increase each year despite declining incidence rates in men and stable rates in women as a result of population growth and aging. The rising cancer case burden as well as advances in early detection and treatment all contribute to an unprecedented and continuing rise in the number of Americans living with a history of cancer. The number of cancer survivors in the United States is projected to rise to 20.3 million in 2026 and to 26.1 million by 2040. The aging US population also will result in increases in the number of older cancer survivors who are more likely to need complex care: 73% of survivors will be age 65 years or older by 2040, up from 62% in 2016.

Efforts to respond to the growing need have the goal of minimizing the long-term impact of cancer by optimizing survivors' functioning, quality of life, ability to participate in work and life roles, and overall health, as well as better assisting family or friends supporting survivors as caregivers.

For the report, authors led by Catherine M. Alfano, Ph.D., ACS vice president of survivorship, reviewed research identifying and addressing the needs of cancer survivors and caregivers to create a set of critical priorities for care delivery, research, education, and policy to equitably improve survivor outcomes and support caregivers.

The report says efforts are needed to accelerate progress in 3 priority areas: 1) implementing routine assessment of survivors' needs and functioning and caregivers' needs; 2) facilitating personalized, tailored, information and referrals from diagnosis onward for both survivors and caregivers, shifting services from point of care (in clinical settings) to point of need outside of the clinic wherever possible; and 3) disseminating and supporting the implementation of new care methods and interventions.

"Our investment in new, better cancer treatments has been a literal lifesaver, with more survivors than ever living years beyond their original diagnosis," said Dr. Alfano. "These survivors then must cope with new risks and ongoing symptoms, so failing to invest in efforts to address the long-term problems confronting survivors and their caregivers is unethical. Our aim with this report is to map out a comprehensive strategy that must be undertaken by multiple stakeholders to meet survivors' and caregivers' unique needs while minimizing the impact of provider shortages and controlling costs to healthcare systems, survivors, and families."

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