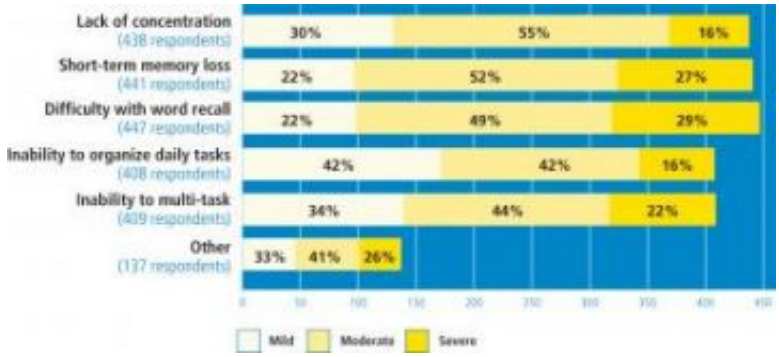
Medical Xpress

Cognitive deficits lead to 'loss of self' among cancer patients

October 2 2007



At least 50 percent of respondents rated their symptoms as moderate to severe in each of the categories. Additional areas of impact included the ability to learn and/or retain new information and duties, intolerance to external stimuli and issues with transposition/dyslexia. Credit: © Hurricane Voices Breast Cancer Foundation

For some cancer patients, side effects impacting cognition don't end with the last dose of chemotherapy.

According to a new survey, the cognitive impairment experienced by 14 to 45 percent of cancer patients can be long-lasting and severely affect their personal and professional lives. Patients report that the lack of concentration, short-term memory loss, difficulty with word recall and the inability to organize or multi-task have led to significant problems at home and in the workplace.

"One of the most poignant and striking findings from this study is that patients most severely affected no longer identify with the person they were prior to treatment," said Janet Colantuono, executive director of Hurricane Voices Breast Cancer Foundation, the nonprofit that conducted the survey. "Contributing to this 'loss of self' is the loss of credibility, respect of others, self esteem and employment."

In addition to exploring the impact on their personal and professional lives, the Cognitive Changes Related to Cancer Treatment survey also uncovered that 42 percent of the survey respondents describe their doctors as dismissive or indifferent when it came to addressing their concerns.

"This survey clearly demonstrates the serious ramifications that enduring cognitive impairment can have on cancer patients' lives," said Dr. Ian Tannock, a leading researcher in the area of cognition and cancer. "It also underscores an immediate need for education in the medical community to bridge the gap between patients' concern and oncologists' understanding of this issue."

Colantuono said she, too, expects the study to result in increased awareness among medical professionals so they can better assist patients struggling with cognitive impairments following treatment.

"Results of this survey enhance current scientific research - presenting a collective voice that illuminates the patient experience," adds Colantuono. "We anticipate that it will also help break through obstacles in the doctor/patient relationship."

Source: Hurricane Voices Breast Cancer Foundation

Citation: Cognitive deficits lead to 'loss of self' among cancer patients (2007, October 2) retrieved 24 April 2024 from
https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-10-cognitive-deficits-loss-cancer-patients.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.