

Social support is critical to life satisfaction in young patients with cancer

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Among adolescents and young adults with cancer, social support was the most decisive factor associated with life satisfaction. Published early online in *Cancer*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, the findings indicate that social support and how young cancer patients process the experience of being ill have far greater importance for their life satisfaction than sociodemographic or medical factors do. September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

Life satisfaction strongly relates to quality of life, which can be affected during cancer treatment. Adolescents and [young adults](#) with cancer may be especially vulnerable as they are dealing with a serious disease at a complex psychosocial stage of life that can include leaving home, establishing financial and social independence, forming a family, and starting a career.

To determine which factors might affect life satisfaction in these patients a team of researchers at University Medical Center Leipzig in Germany provided a questionnaire at two time points (12 months apart) to 514 young patients who were aged 18 to 39 years at the time of cancer diagnosis and were diagnosed in the last four years. In comparing answers between the first and second questionnaire, the investigators looked for differences in life satisfaction and 10 subdomains: friends/acquaintances, leisure activities/hobbies, health, income/financial security, work/profession, housing situation, family life, children/family planning, partnership, and sexuality. The researchers also assessed various sociodemographic (e.g. age, education, having children), medical (e.g. treatments, time since diagnosis, additional disease), and psychosocial (e.g. [social support](#), perceived adjustment to the disease) factors in patients.

The most prevalent areas of life impacted in a negative way were observed in financial and

professional situations, family planning, and sexuality. Of all the examined variables, social support was the most decisive factor associated with [life satisfaction](#) at both time points.

"Care providers should pay special attention to those patients who lack social support and have higher levels of disease-related burden, and should be included in suitable supportive care programs," said lead author Katja Leuteritz, Dipl-Psych.

More information: "Life satisfaction in young adults with cancer and the role of sociodemographic, medical and psychosocial factors: Results of a longitudinal study." Katja Leuteritz, Michael Friedrich, Annkathrin Sender, Erik Nowe, Yve Stoebel-Richter, and Kristina Geue. *CANCER*; Published Online: September 10, 2018. [DOI: 10.1002/cncr.31659](https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.31659)

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