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Psychosocial Functioning in Pediatric Cancer FREE

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Abstract

Objective To describe the emergence of pediatric psycho-oncology and to summarize research on psychosocial aspects of childhood cancer and survivorship. **Methods** To review research into illness communication and informed consent, procedural pain, late effects, psychological distress, coping and adjustment, and special risk populations. Methodological challenges, appropriate methodology, and directions for future research are discussed. **Results** The past 30 years have seen change from avoidance of communication about cancer to an emphasis on straightforward discussion of diagnosis and prognosis. Behavioral research has led to interventions to reduce procedural distress. Late effects have been observed in social functioning. Although average levels of distress in survivors of pediatric cancer are typical, subsets of more vulnerable patients and family members exist. Factors predicting positive and negative coping have been identified. **Conclusions** As the numbers of pediatric cancer survivors increase, psychosocial researchers will be better able to conduct longitudinal studies not only of adjustment and its predictors but also of the impact of the emerging medical treatments and interventions to ameliorate late effects of treatment. Additional funding, improving methodology, and multi-institutional cooperation will aid future pediatric psycho-oncology investigators.

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