

# Surviving Cancer- Myth vs Reality

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## Objectives

- Identify trends in survivorship
- Define a “cancer survivor”
- Review Stages/Seasons of Cancer Survivorship
- Survivors expectations
- Myths of Survivorship
- Realities of Cancer Survivorship
- Bridging the gap between myths and reality



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## Why Focus on Survivorship Care?

- **The number of survivors are predicted to increase significantly over the next 20 years due to:**
  - Improved early detection
  - Improved treatments
  - Aging baby boomers-there will just be more of us!
  - Longer life expectancies
- **Cancer survivors often experience a higher burden of illness**



American Cancer Society.. Facts and Figures. 2013.

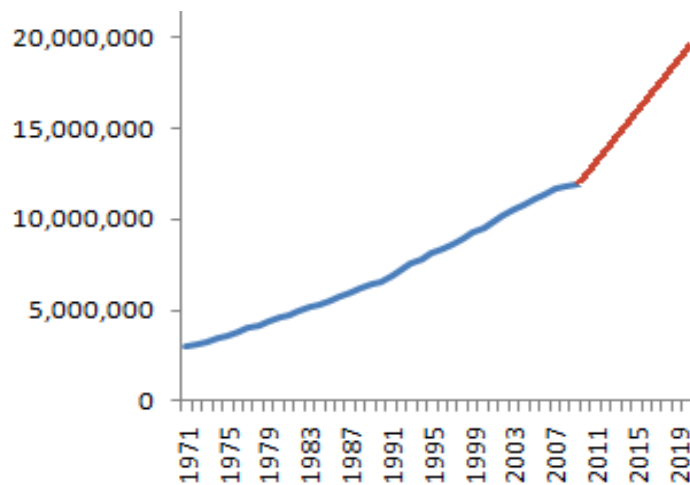
Yabroff KR, Lawrence WF, Clauser S, Davis WW, Brown ML. Burden of illness in cancer survivors: findings from a population-based national sample. *J Natl Cancer Inst.* Sep 1 2004;96(17):1322-1330.



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## Cancer Survivors



Source: Graph created using data from Horner et al. SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2006 [http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/ocs/prevalence/prevalence\\_d.html#line](http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/ocs/prevalence/prevalence_d.html#line), as cited in the Colorado Cancer Plan, 2010-2015.

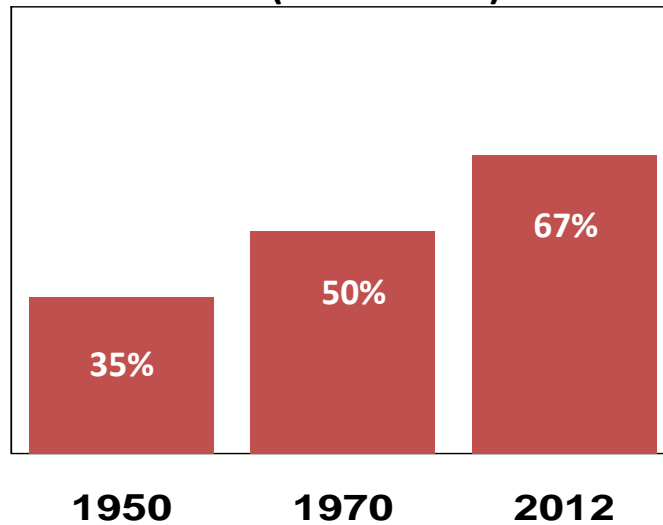


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## Trends in 5-Year Relative Survival Rates

(1950 - 2012)



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## Who is a Cancer Survivor?

- **NCCS, ACS, and NCI definition:** Anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer is a survivor—from the time of diagnosis and for the balance of life
- **Different time points of survivors:**
  - In active treatment
  - Those finished with active treatment
  - Disease free long term survivors
  - Those living with cancer as a chronic illness



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## Seasons of Cancer Survivorship

- Acute Survivorship (1)
- Extended Survivorship (1)
- Transitional survivorship (2)
- Permanent Survivorship(1)

1.Mullins, F, Seasons of Survival, New England Journal of Medicine, 313:270-273, 1985

2.Miller, K, Seasons of Survivorship Revisited. [Cancer J. 2008 Nov-Dec;14\(6\):369-74](#)

December 2008.



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## Acute Survivorship

- Begins with the diagnosis and extends throughout the treatment phase.
  - Overwhelming fear and anxiety may dominate
  - Patients are facing their own mortality
  - Pain is a common element of this stage
  - Dominated by treatment, surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation
  - Coping with the effects of therapies occupies the energies of the patient and family.



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## Extended Survivorship

- Patient may be in remission
- Rigorous treatment has ended
- Period of “watchful waiting” begins
- Dominant psychological issue is fear of recurrence
- Complicated by physical limitations
  - Fatigue, body image changes, reduced capacity for exercise
- Individuals respond differently to this phase
  - May be marked by **isolation, devastation and/or depression**
  - Medical support team has a diminished role in providing support or counseling
  - **Support groups** play a role at this time in acclimating patients and families back into an “active world”.

## Transitional Survivorship

- Transition from Active Treatment
  - **“Alive and Living with Cancer”**
    - Treatment for recurrent, active and/or advanced disease-disease is now chronic and goal is improved quality and quantity of life
  - Complete Remission with Ongoing treatment
    - Hormonal blockage in breast cancer patients, maintenance therapy for leukemia.
  - Complete Remission with good prognosis



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## Permanent Survivorship

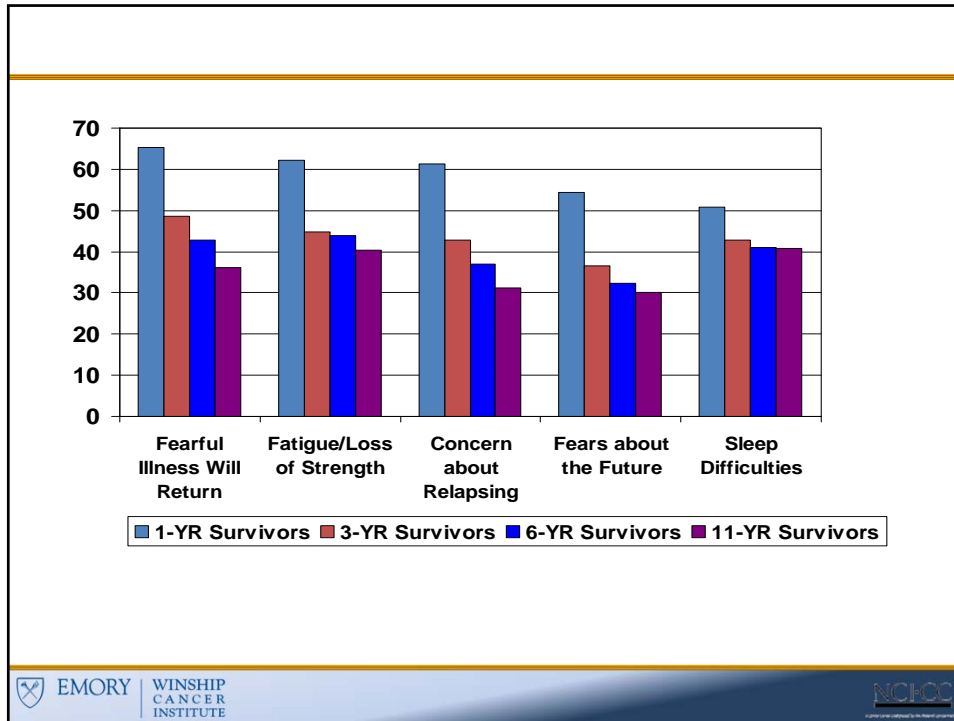
- Roughly equated with “cure”
- Period when the activity of the disease or the likelihood of its returning is small
- Problems with **employment and insurance** are common
- Risk of **long term, secondary effects of treatment on health** are often more evident.
- **Fertility and sexuality** concerns may appear.



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## Survivors Expectations

- Immediate **“Cure”**
- Return to **“Normal”**
- **No long term effects** of treatment
- Back to work within a **“few weeks”**
- Quickly improving **fatigue and pain**
- Appetite to normal
- Return to pre-cancer **sexual activity**

## Myths of Survivorship

- Patient will return to “normal” as soon as they finish treatment and “ring the bell”.
  - Employment
  - Physical Activity
  - Diet/nutrition
- All treatment related side effects will disappear as soon as treatment is complete.
- Fatigue will improve once treatment ends
- Normal ADL will return quickly



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## Realities of Survivorship

- Fatigue may be overwhelming due to deconditioning and psychosocial stresses
- Anxiety and fear increases
- May need to rethink career goals and/or return to work



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## Realities of Survivorship

- Financial costs associated with cancer treatment may be overwhelming and cause strain on the individual and family finances
- Risk for recurrent cancer or second cancer diagnosis
- Physical late effects may become a problem, weeks, months or years after treatment.
  - Fertility
  - Chronic pain
  - Cognitive dysfunction
  - Fatigue
  - Lymphedema
  - Neuropathy
  - Osteoporosis
  - Menopause onset
  - Anxiety
  - Depression



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## Bridging the Gap

- Get an accurate treatment summary
- Patient needs a treatment plan for follow-up clearly outlined
- Patient needs to be aware of any potential long term and/or late effects of treatment
- Stop smoking
- Limit alcohol intake
- Get adequate sleep
- Increase exercise to 150 minutes /week-include aerobic and resistance exercise
- Limit sun exposure and use a sun screen
- Eat a well balanced healthy diet
- Limit dietary supplements to RDA



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## Survivor Panel

- **Robert Smith**-Extended Survivor-Head and Neck Cancer
- **Carolyn Higgins**-Transitional Survivor-Multiple Myeloma
- **Sally Montgomery**-Permanent Survivor-Breast Canc

**They will tell you their stories and the Myths and Realities related to Survivorship**



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## Questions



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