

Standards Established for Psychosocial Care of Children With Cancer and Their Families

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A group of pediatric oncology psychosocial experts developed evidence-based standards for the care of children with cancer and their families. Psychosocial risks are substantial in this patient population. The standards are published in a dedicated special issue of *Pediatric Blood & Cancer*.¹

Children with cancer and their families are known to experience psychological and social challenges during and after cancer treatment; however, the psychosocial services offered to patients in pediatric oncology settings can vary significantly. These standards are evidence- and consensus-based for pediatric psychosocial care.

"With evidence that such care contributes to positive quality-of-life outcomes of children with cancer and their family members, it is hoped that universal access to psychosocial support and intervention for patients and family members can be guaranteed for all 21st-century families who face childhood cancer and its sequelae," said Lori Wiener, PhD, lead author of an introductory article in the issue.

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The defined standards include systemic assessment of psychosocial health care needs; monitoring high-risk patients,

such as those with brain tumors, for neuropsychological deficits; conducting yearly psychosocial screenings for long-term survivors; assessing financial hardship; assessing parents and caregivers for mental health needs; providing information to youth and their families on psychoeducation and on their disease and its treatment; and appropriate preparatory information for youth about invasive procedures.

In the introductory article, the authors explain that a lack of standards for meeting the psychosocial care needs of pediatric patients with cancer and their families has resulted in inconsistent access to behavioral health care for these patients and families. “The standards provide a starting point for cancer centers to identify essential elements of comprehensive psychosocial care.”

REFERENCE

1. Wiener L, Kazak AE, Noll RB, Patenaude AF, Kupst MJ. Standards for the psychosocial care of children with cancer and their families: an introduction to the special issue. *Pediatr Blood Cancer*. 2015;62(S5):S419-S424.

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