

The Impact of Cancer and Quality of Life in Head and Neck Cancer Long-term Survivors in the UK

Background

Head and neck cancer (HNC) can have detrimental effects on patients' functioning and quality of life (QoL). The rising incidence and survival rates in HNC result in an increasing population of survivors. It is thus important to understand their needs and experience, including positive aspects.

Aims

This study aimed to investigate (i) the associations of socio-demographic, clinical and psychological characteristics with positive and negative impacts of cancer (IOC) among HNC survivors, and (ii) the association between IOC and health-related QoL.

Methods

HNC survivors identified from the cancer registry of a London hospital completed validated measures of psychological distress (HADS), post-traumatic stress (PCL-C), social support (ESSI) and QoL (EORTC-QLQ-C30), as well as, the Impact of Cancer scale (IOCv2). Demographic and clinical data were collected. Linear regression models were built to estimate associations with the IOC and QoL.

Results

At a mean of 7 years (SD=5) after treatment (N=93), the following risk factors were independently associated with negative IOC: psychological distress (Beta=.39, $p<.001$) and post-traumatic stress (Beta=.41, $p<.001$). Higher positive IOC was associated with greater time since treatment (Beta=.2, $p<.05$). Negative IOC scores were negatively associated with all EORTC-QLQ-C30 functioning scales and Global QoL. There was no significant association between clinical variables and IOC scores.

Conclusions

HNC survivors report both positive and negative impacts of cancer. Negative perceptions of cancer are strongly associated with poorer QoL. Screening for psychological distress, including post-traumatic stress, could identify those most in need of support and enable development of targeted interventions.

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