

Rates and risk factors for post-traumatic stress disorder among adult hematopoietic cell transplant recipients and their informal caregivers

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Biol Blood Marrow Transplant 2019, 25: 145-150.

(Survey administered July 2016 – December 2016)

This research measured the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in hematopoietic cell transplant (HCT) survivors and their informal caregivers. Analyzing data from 2,157 HCT recipients and their caregivers, results showed that while rates of PTSD were relatively low (3.3% in patients, 6.6% in caregivers), caregivers consistently reported higher rates of PTSD than patients. Most caregivers that reported PTSD symptoms were not caring for patients that were experiencing PTSD. Interestingly, patients with recent transplants (≤ 5 years since HCT) and their caretakers were more likely to experience PTSD.

PTSD, in both patients and caregivers, was associated with significantly higher distress levels related to uncertainty, family strain, medical demands, finances, identity, and health burden compared to those without PTSD. Patients with PTSD were more likely to be disabled or unable to work, have had treatment for PTSD, and to be taking medications for anxiety, depression, and sleep. Despite the overall low rates of PTSD, the study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing the psychological impact on both HCT recipients and their caregivers, with a particular focus on caregivers who often experience greater distress than the patients themselves.