

Prevalence of and Factors Associated with Marital Distress among Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation Survivors: Results from a Large Cross-Sectional Study

Langer SL, Yi JC, Syrjala KL, Schoemans H, Mukherjee A, Lee SJ.

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(Survey administered July 2014 – June 2015)

This study investigated the impact of hematopoietic cell transplantation (HCT) on the intimate relationships of 1,047 married survivors. This is the largest sample reported to date in which post-HCT relationship adjustment has been investigated. The results indicated an overall positive picture of long-term functioning in HCT survivors, comparable to the general population. However, a portion of respondents (19%) reported distress in their relationships. Factors associated with higher odds of relationship distress included cancer and treatment distress, depression, and time post-transplant. Interestingly, when analyzing gender differences, depression was more strongly associated with relationship distress among females, while cancer and treatment distress and time post-transplant were linked more to relationship distress among males.

The findings suggest that, despite challenges associated with HCT, many survivors maintain positive long-term relationships with their partners. However, the study suggests that addressing psychological factors such as depression and cancer-related distress, particularly in gender-specific contexts, can enhance intervention strategies and improve patients' quality of life. Informing patients and their partners about potential challenges before transplantation and providing them with tools to navigate communication effectively are key to helping patients maintain their relationship quality post-transplant.