Cancer Survivorship

Costs, Inequalities and Post-Treatment Follow-Up. Building Capacity to Meet the Challenges to the Health Service and Society

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Cancer is increasingly recognised as a chronic illness. The number of people diagnosed with cancer in Ireland is rising year-on-year. Survival for many cancers has improved over the past 2-3 decades and two-thirds of those diagnosed now survive five years or longer. These trends mean that almost 100,000 people are living with cancer in Ireland. This number is projected to increase significantly in coming years with population ageing and further developments in treatment.

Therapeutic advances mean that many people with cancer successfully complete primary treatment and can, potentially, resume everyday activities – transitioning from a “patient” to “survivor”. However, many survivors have multiple complex health conditions. Many also experience significant physical, psychosocial and cognitive problems and limitations and have considerable ongoing needs for medical and non-medical support and care. While it is generally accepted that specific services to meet these needs are lacking, survivors have increased healthcare utilisation, beyond the level that would be expected to accommodate regular cancer follow-up visits and investigations. This raises serious questions about the ability of health services to meet survivors’ needs in the future. Cancer survivorship, therefore, presents significant challenges to survivors, health services and society.

This programme focuses on three key emerging areas of importance in the cancer survivorship arena, which will be addressed in the form of three areas: acceptability, preferences and costs for alternative models of post-treatment follow-up; costs, and epidemiology, of lost productivity due to cancer, with a focus on absenteeism, presenteeism and premature mortality; and impact of rural residence on cancer-related expectations, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, experiences and outcomes.

The second and the third areas are the focus of the NUI Galway team.

