



Advancing chronic pain management in cancer survivors

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Advances in cancer treatment made significant improvements in the prognosis of cancer. The number of people who received a diagnosis of pain continues to increase, and the majority are expected to live long after the end of treatment. However, for many cancer survivors, the end of treatment does not always mean the end of cancer-associated symptoms. Among these, pain is one of the common and complex symptoms. Unfortunately, pain can continue long after the cancer treatment and negatively influences the patient's quality of life [1].

In this issue of the *Journal of Anesthesia*, the Japan Society of Pain Clinicians (JSPC) working group published a consensus statement for the treatment of chronic pain in cancer survivors [2]. In this statement, cancer survivor is defined as following [2],

“a person in any stage of life from the time that cancer is diagnosed or suspected to the end of life, rather than only a person whose cancer is cured.” In short, we believe it is more accurate to define a “cancer survivor” as “someone who has been affected by cancer” rather than as a “survivor.”

Definition of a cancer survivor as “someone who has been affected by cancer” is simple and meaningful when addressing cancer-associated symptoms in a broader way.

The consensus statement emphasizes that not all pain experienced by cancer survivors is pain directly arising from cancer (“cancer pain” in narrow meaning). In addition to “cancer pain”, cancer survivors sometimes experience pain associated with cancer treatment or pain that is not associated with cancer [3]. Recognizing the etiology of

pain is essential, as it facilitates the tailored approach to each patient, rather than treating all pain with the same protocols.

The consensus statement also emphasized the psychosocial dimension for the assessment and treatment of pain in cancer survivors. Cancer survivors sometimes experience severe psychological burdens, such as fear of recurrence or emotional distress due to the experience of cancer diagnosis/treatment [4]. The consensus statement recommends that healthcare providers should address the psychosocial challenges of cancer survivors when treating their pain. This approach encourages integrating psychological support into pain management, thereby addressing the complete overview of factors that might influence a survivor's experience of pain.

Chronic pain in cancer survivors has received relatively limited attention. However, as survival rates increase, there is growing recognition of the need for the pain treatment of cancer survivors. The consensus statement is expected to facilitate a better understanding of chronic pain in cancer survivors in broader medical societies.

Data availability The data associated with this paper are available upon request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The author has no conflict of interest with this article.

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