Fear of Cancer Recurrence: Strategies for Adaptive Coping

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Agenda

• Defining fear of cancer recurrence (FCR)
• Significance of the problem
• Assessing YOUR fear
• Strategies for adaptive coping
  • Mindfulness
  • Values-based action
Fear of Cancer Recurrence (FCR)
Lebel et al, 2016

“Fear, worry, or concern about cancer returning or progressing.”
Significance

• **Prevalence**
  – Mild/transient FCR is almost *universal*.
  – 40-70% of survivors report *clinically significant FCR* (Thewes et al., 2012; NCCN Survivorship Guidelines, 2015).

• **Trajectory**
  – FCR remains stable over the survivorship trajectory, even when risk of recurrence is low (Simard et al., 2013).

• **Unmet need**
  – FCR is the most frequently endorsed unmet supportive care need among survivors (Armes et al., 2009; Harrison et al., 2011; Hodgkinson et al., 2007).
Higher FCR Is Associated With...

- Younger age
- Children still at home
- Number/severity of symptoms
- Medical comorbidities
- Lower quality of life
- Higher perceived risk of recurrence
- Need for more support
- More healthcare visits

- Positive health behavior change (e.g., healthier diet, sunscreen use, avoiding tobacco, continuation of treatment)
Health Service Usage Among Survivors

• High FCR is associated with excessive threat monitoring:
  – Hyper-vigilant self-examination
  – Requests for unnecessary scans
  – Greater number of unscheduled outpatient medical visits
  – Greater number of ER/ED visits
  – Greater use of counseling, support groups, and CAM interventions
  – Higher health care costs

• High FCR is also associated with avoidant coping:
  • Of cancer screening, regular check-ups, and other medical tests
  • May compromise health outcomes.

Thewes et al., 2012; Lebel et al., 2013
Experiential Exercise #1
Assessing YOUR Fear with FCR-7
FCR-7 Scoring

• Add scores for each of the 7 questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>All the time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am afraid that my cancer may recur.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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• Total scores ≥ 17 = “clinically significant” fear.
• Total scores ≥ 27 = “severe” fear.

Support is available!
Adaptive Coping Strategies

MINDFULNESS
- Present-moment awareness
- Noticing/untangling from internal barriers
- Strengthening your resilient self

VALUES-BASED ACTION
- Defining your values
- Mindfully engaging in values-based actions
- Using values as a guide to daily behavior
Experiential Exercise #2
Experiential Exercise #3
Values-Based Actions

Brainstorm as many as you can

Specific Actions

Using your ideas above, develop 3 SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to increase consistent living with one core value.

Week 1 Date: _______________ Core Value: ____________________________

1.

2.

3.

Possible Barriers
“Experiential” Exercise #5
Protective Factors
Opportunities

• Healthy IU
  – [https://healthy.iu.edu/](https://healthy.iu.edu/)
  – Mindfulness, resiliency, fitness, nutrition counseling, caregiver support, etc…

• Eskenazi Health
  – Fear of Recurrence 4-week Resiliency course - next offering in June!
  – See flier for details – email sheljohn@iu.edu

• IU Simon Cancer Center
  – “First Mondays” support groups – call 317-944-0301

• Cancer Support Community

• CANCERcare®
  – [https://www.cancercare.org/](https://www.cancercare.org/)
Experiential Exercise #6
THANK YOU

To YOU for your participation.

To Healthy IU for caring about cancer survivors.