

Religious/spiritual struggle in young adult hematopoietic cell transplant survivors

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(Survey administered July 2011 – June 2012)

This research focuses on understanding the experiences of young adult survivors of hematopoietic cell transplantation (HCT) who have undergone cancer treatment during their adolescence. The study explores the relationship between religious or spiritual struggle (R/S struggle) and existential quality of life (QOL) among these survivors. The term "existential concerns" (EC) refers to the contemplation of life's meaning, identity, relationships, and purpose, which becomes particularly challenging for young adults dealing with cancer.

The study involved 172 young adult survivors, aged 18–39, who completed a survey assessing R/S struggle, QOL, depression, and medical information. Results showed that 30% of participants reported some degree of R/S struggle, and 14% of participants reported moderate to severe depression. R/S struggle was associated with worse depression. There was also a strong association between R/S struggle and poorer existential QOL, indicating that those facing religious or spiritual challenges also experienced difficulties in areas related to identity, relationships, and life's meaning. Furthermore, the study highlighted the impact of existential concerns on mental health, emphasizing the need for screening and interventions to address these issues in young adult cancer survivors.

The findings suggest that young adults dealing with cancer not only grapple with the physical aspects of their illness but also face significant existential challenges. The study encourages further research to explore the longitudinal trajectory of religious or spiritual coping in this population and develop effective clinical interventions to support positive transformation and well-being.