Evaluating Different Types of Cancer Survivorship Care

What was the research about?
Survivorship care is a type of care that patients get during and after cancer treatments. This care includes checking to see if the cancer has returned, screening for new cancers, and treating health problems related to cancer and its treatment.

The research team compared three types of survivorship care offered at cancer centers:

- **One survivorship-specific visit.** A clinician trained in survivorship care, such as a nurse practitioner or physician assistant, met with the patient once. The clinician created a care plan with the patient and provided many of the necessary services during the visit.

- **Multiple survivorship-specific visits over time.** A clinician trained in survivorship care met with the patient multiple times. The clinician created a care plan with the patient and worked with a team to provide most of the necessary services during these visits.

- **Survivorship care integrated into typical cancer care.** A cancer-care team provided survivorship care during and after the patient’s cancer treatments as needed. The clinician didn’t always create a care plan for the patient or provide survivorship care systematically. No single clinician oversaw survivorship care.

What were the results?
No one type of survivorship care performed better than the other types overall. For example, compared with patients who had one survivorship-specific visit

- Patients who got care from a cancer-care team reported better quality of care.

- Patients who had multiple survivorship-specific visits reported more physical health concerns but made fewer visits to cancer doctors.

Among the three types of survivorship care, satisfaction with care and patient confidence in managing health and health care were about the same. Patients were highly satisfied with all types of care.

Who was in the study?
The study included 991 patients who had finished treatment for breast, colorectal, or prostate cancer. The patients received care at 32 cancer centers across the United States. Of these patients, 85 percent were white, 8 percent were black, and 6 percent were other races. The average age was 60, and 86 percent were women.

What did the research team do?
The team followed patients as they received survivorship care at the cancer centers. Patients filled out a survey at their first visit right after they finished treatment and again one week, three months, and six months later. The survey included questions about

- Quality of care
- Quality of life
- Confidence in managing health and health care
- Frequency of visits to different types of doctors
Satisfaction with the survivorship care
Cancer survivors, doctors, and members of patient groups gave input on the study design and analysis.

What were the limits of the study?
Because patients weren't assigned by chance to the different types of survivorship care, the team can't say for sure that it was differences in care that led to the survey results. For example, the differences may be due to patients' backgrounds. Most patients in the study were white women. Results may be different for men or patients of other races.

Future research could look at other things that may affect patients' well-being after cancer treatment, such as patients' other health problems or where patients receive care.

How can people use the results?
Cancer centers can use the results when considering which types of survivorship care to offer to patients.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Mead158.