

Fertility Issues in Female Cancer Survivors

Data Collection

Survey

The initial survey we had planned focused on a sample of female cancer survivors who were diagnosed with cancer in the pre-menopausal stage of life. We decided to alter the survey because we do not have access to a large population of individuals who fit this inclusion criteria. Instead, we focused on women's knowledge of how cancer and cancer treatment methods affect fertility. Making this change allowed us to collect data that is useful in aiding in the awareness of the effects of cancer treatment. After researching for the literature review, we found that the topic of education and consultation regarding cancer and fertility is an area that is in need of improvement.

The objective of the survey we administered is to gain a deeper understanding of women's common knowledge about how cancer treatment can affect a young cancer survivor's quality of life and fertility. Our survey was created using an application called SurveyMonkey. Once we entered our questions and edited the survey, the application created a web link that we could send to participants. The survey was anonymous. We sent the survey to fifty women over the age of 18 in our cellphone contact lists. We received a total of 36 responses.

Interview

I was able to conduct two interviews with two women I know who have had cancer in the pre-menopausal stage of life. Neither of the participants have children.

Number One

I conducted this interview with my cousin who was in the early stages of Leukemia. She is now 18 years old. It is a semi-structured interview. I had to make some changes (changing individual's financial status to parent's financial status) due to the young age.

1. How old were you when you were diagnosed with cancer?

“Seven.”

2. How would you describe your [parent’s] financial status when you were diagnosed with cancer? Did your [parent’s] financial status change as you underwent treatment?

“I don’t have any exact numbers, but I do know there was more of a financial struggle after I was diagnosed.”

3. Describe how you felt when you were first diagnosed with cancer. What were your main concerns you had when you found out? (e.g. quality of life, finances, loved one’s reactions, etc.)

“I didn’t fully understand what was happening. I just knew that my family was upset about it, so it wasn’t a good thing.”

4. How would you describe your relationship status at the time of diagnosis? (e.g. Married, Single, Divorced, etc.)

“Single.”

5. Please explain how you felt about having children in the future before and after the diagnosis.

“It wasn’t something that I was worried about.”

6. What type of treatment or treatments did you receive?

“First, I received a biopsy (surgery) to attempt to remove the tumor. When that was unsuccessful, I received chemo.”

7. How would you describe your doctor’s or oncologist’s explanation of future fertility issues after treatment?

“The doctor did not discuss any fertility options with me, most likely because I was so young. My parents were told that I may have trouble having or may not be able to have children because of the chemo.”

8. Did your financial status have an effect on your decision to pursue fertility preservation options? Why or why not?

“No, because I was young so my parents weren’t worried about it.”

9. What fertility options, if any, do you know of or have already used? (e.g. In-vitro fertilization, ovarian cryopreservation, etc.)

“I have heard of in-vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, and fertility medications, but I haven’t used any of them.”

10. Do you have children?

“No.”

Number 2

This survey was conducted with a friend from Riley Children’s Hospital who was diagnosed with Lymphoma in 2008. She is 20 now. It was also semi-structured because I changed the individual’s financial status to parent’s financial status.

1. When were you diagnosed with cancer?

“I was diagnosed with Lymphoma when I was eleven.”

2. How would you describe your [parents] financial status when you were diagnosed with cancer? Did your [parents] financial status change as you underwent treatment?

“They didn’t talk about it very often. But now I realize how much medical bills cost and they must have spent quite a bit.”

3. Describe how you felt when you were first diagnosed with cancer. What were your main concerns you had when you found out? (e.g. quality of life, finances, loved one’s reactions, etc.)

“It was a sad time for me and my family. I had a lot of support, but it was still very hard on me. My main concerns were missing school and wondering how my friends and the rest of my family would react.”

4. How would you describe your relationship status at the time of diagnosis? (e.g. Married, Single, Divorced, etc.)

“Single.”

5. Please explain how you felt about having children in the future before and after the diagnosis.

“I knew before and after my diagnosis that I eventually wanted children.”

6. What type of treatment or treatments did you receive?

“I received three rounds of chemotherapy.”

7. How would you describe your doctor’s or oncologist’s explanation of future fertility issues after treatment?

“I remember him [my doctor] asking me if I wanted kids. My parents have told me that he explained I may have trouble with it when I do decide to have kids.”

8. Did your financial status have an effect on your decision to pursue fertility preservation options? Why or why not?

“No. I wasn’t old enough to consider any fertility preservation options.”

9. What fertility options, if any, do you know of or have already used? (e.g. In-vitro fertilization, ovarian cryopreservation, etc.)

“I’ve heard about in vitro fertilization, but I haven’t used it.”

10. Do you have any children?

“No, but I would like to have children in the future if I can.”