

Research Article

Unmet Supportive Care Needs among Breast Cancer Survivors of Community-Based Support Group in Kuching, Sarawak

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Background. Recognizing the needs of cancer survivors is one of the important aspects in healthcare delivery. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of unmet supportive care needs and its associated factors among the breast cancer survivors of community-based support group in Kuching, Sarawak. **Materials and Methods.** This was a cross-sectional study using Supportive Care Needs Survey (SCNS-SF34). All the members of community-based breast cancer support groups in Kuching were invited. A total of 101 respondents were face-to-face interviewed after the consent was obtained. Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS version 20. **Results.** The respondents endorsed *health system and information* domain with the highest mean score (2.48; 95% CI: 2.32–2.64). Top 10 items with “moderate to high” level unmet needs had a prevalence of 14.9% to 34.7% of respondents indicating need. Significantly higher level of unmet needs was associated with survivors who were younger (less than 60 years old), had higher education attainment, were unemployed, had survival duration of up to 5 years, and were undergoing active treatment. **Conclusion.** Systematic delivery of health information which is targeted, culturally sensitive, and linguistically appropriate for addressing younger age, education level, employment status, length of survivorship, and treatment stage should be considered not only at hospital-based setting but also at the community-based support groups.

1. Introduction

Breast cancer remains the most common cancer among women worldwide [1]. Similar experience is seen in Malaysia with breast cancer being the most common cancer among women [2]. Advances in detection and treatment modalities have improved the survival rate of women with breast cancer. In Malaysia, the 5-year survival rate among breast cancer patients has seen improvements over the past decades; studies revealed a 5-year observed survival from 58.4% (CI 0.54–0.63) to 75.7% (CI 0.73–0.79) [3]. Because of its high prevalence and relatively good prognosis, the increase in numbers of survivors forms a growing area of clinical interests and research.

A diagnosis of cancer can alter a person's perspective on health and life itself [4]. Female breast cancer survivors are often weighed down by issues of physical lethargy, pain, breast sensitivity, and difficulty to concentrate which

were associated with diminished physical functioning and emotional well-being [5]. Their psychological well-being was found to be affected by fear of cancer spread, recurrence, distress from surgery, fear of second cancer, and future tests [6].

Cancer survivors face a wide range of problems during and after their primary treatment which often persists in a chronic, long-term manner [5]. During this period of survivorship, these survivors have multitude of needs which require attention and identification. Recognizing these needs early in the cancer care continuum is important. Therefore, needs assessment should be carried out as it offers three advantages: (i) patient's perceived needs are directly assessed, (ii) the level of need can be identified as well, and (iii) individuals or patient subgroups with higher level of needs can be identified [7]. Furthermore, understanding unmet needs among cancer survivors, across different age groups, gender, regions, cancer types, stages, survival durations, and