Resilience Among Patients Across the Cancer Continuum: Diverse Perspectives

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Each phase of the cancer experience profoundly affects patients’ lives. Much of the literature has focused on negative consequences of cancer; however, the study of resilience may enable providers to promote more positive psychosocial outcomes before, during, and after the cancer experience. The current review describes the ways in which elements of resilience have been defined and studied at each phase of the cancer continuum. Extensive literature searches were conducted to find studies assessing resilience during one or more stages of the adult cancer continuum. For all phases of the cancer continuum, resilience descriptions included preexisting or baseline characteristics, such as demographics and personal attributes (e.g., optimism, social support), mechanisms of adaptation, such as coping and medical experiences (e.g., positive provider communication), as well as psychosocial outcomes, such as growth and quality of life. Promoting resilience is a critical element of patient psychosocial care. Nurses may enable resilience by recognizing and promoting certain baseline characteristics and optimizing mechanisms of adaptation.