The Emotional Experience and Perceived Changes in Siblings of Children With Cancer Reported During a Group Intervention

Alexandra Neville, BA, Melissa Simard, PhD, Kelly Hancock, MA, Alan Rokeach, MA, Amani Saleh, MSc, and Maru Barrera, PhD

Neville is a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary in Alberta; Simard is a clinical psychologist for MindSpace Psychological Services in Montreal, Quebec; and Hancock is a senior clinical scientist in the Division of Hematology/Oncology and the Department of Psychology, all at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Ontario, all in Canada.

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Barrera can be reached at maru.barrera@sickkids.ca, with copy to editor at ONFEditor@ons.org.

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A diagnosis of childhood cancer and its treatment is a devastating experience for the ill child, parents, and siblings, and it can lead to psychological difficulties (Alderfer et al., 2010; Prchal & Landolt, 2012). Siblings have reported a reduction of parental attention (Chesler, Allswede, & Barbarin, 1992; Freeman, O’Dell, & Meola, 2000; Sargent et al., 1995; Sloper, 2000); missing parents and the ill child when apart (Havermans & Eiser, 1994; Prchal & Landolt, 2012); a sense of jealousy, anger, and loneliness (Chesler et al., 1992; Dolgin, Somer, Zaidel, & Zaizov, 1997; Havermans & Eiser, 1994; Sloper, 2000); and a loss of a family way of life (Woodgate, 2006). Siblings have also reported feeling worried (Nolbris, Enskär, & Hellström, 2007) and guilty for the illness (Bendor, 1990). These experiences and emotional responses may lead to psychological maladjustment in a subgroup of siblings (Alderfer et al., 2010; Alderfer, Labay, & Kazak, 2003; Kaplan, Kaal, Bradley, & Alderfer, 2013; Sidhu, Passmore, & Baker, 2006). Combined, these studies suggest a need for developing preventive interventions targeting the psychosocial difficulties of siblings of children with cancer. Systematic reviews of the literature have reached similar conclusions (Barlow & Ellard, 2006; Houtzager, Grootenhuis, & Last, 1999; Packman, Weber,