



# Using Care Plans to Enhance Care Throughout the Cancer Survivorship Trajectory

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The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) recognizes the importance of cancer survivorship and has launched several initiatives focused on cancer care since 2008. Cancer survivors are those who have been diagnosed with cancer, from the time of diagnosis until death. Recognizing the pivotal role that oncology nurses play in helping patients and their families navigate all phases of the cancer continuum, ONS has partnered with *Journey Forward* in the development of a survivorship care plan builder.

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Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/12.CJON.90-92

One primary goal of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) survivorship initiatives are to raise awareness that survivorship care is every nurse's responsibility. The focus and aim of the initiatives is to (a) identify resources for nurses in all specialties who may be caring for patients who are survivors of adult cancers, (b) address gaps in survivorship care, and (c) develop resources to fill those gaps. ONS has focused on the development of resources for nononcology nurses caring for cancer survivors, with a focus on the late, long-term effects that may be identified and managed by a variety of disciplines. ONS also is launching regional conferences with a focus on survivorship; the goal is to address how nursing can meet the unique needs of cancer survivors across the continuum of their lives and help bridge the gaps in their health care.

## Importance of Survivorship Care

Educating patients and families across the trajectory of cancer care is crucial

to improving patient care outcomes. Teaching health maintenance, as well as monitoring for long-term complications of malignancy and its treatment, are necessary to meet the basic health needs of survivors and provide the necessary screening and follow-up after treatment (Cooper, Loeb, & Smith, 2010).

The Institute of Medicine report *From Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Transition* includes several key recommendations for cancer survivorship care, including (a) building bridges between oncology and primary care providers, (b) developing guidelines to improve quality, (c) providing professional education and training, and (d) creating a survivorship care plan based on the American Society of Clinical Oncology's surveillance guidelines for long-term and later-term effects of cancer treatment (Hewitt, Greenfield, & Stovall, 2006; Hollowell et al., 2010). Several organizations, including ONS, recognize that as the number of cancer survivors continues to increase, significant unmet needs still exist for providers and survivors.

## Journey Forward

Several survivorship care plans are available. *Journey Forward* is one solution to providing comprehensive care for cancer survivors. ONS joined the *Journey Forward* initiative in early 2011. *Journey Forward* is a survivorship care plan builder that provides a free, downloadable tool that can be used by members of the oncology team to build a care plan for patients. The information that comes in the *Journey Forward Toolkit* (CD-ROM) includes information on care plans, billing, and resources for physicians and patients, as well as patient resources that aim to empower patients to request a survivorship care plan.

The *Journey Forward* program is one example of a software program that can be used to create survivorship care plans. Templates are available for planning survivorship care for three cancers, breast, colon, and lymphoma, as well as a generic template that can be tailored to the specific needs of the survivor; more are under development. The template begins with basic patient demographic and contact information of the various healthcare providers participating in the patient's care. The second page of the template includes detailed information about the tumor pathology and staging. The "Treatment" page provides space for detailed information about treatment regimens, dates, dosages, and patient participation in

### For More Information

To learn more about the *Journey Forward* initiative and access the care plan builder described in this article, visit <http://journeyforward.org>.