

A Report from ASPO

Charting a Strategic Direction for the American Society of Preventive Oncology's Survivorship Interest Group

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Introduction

The mission of the American Society of Preventive Oncology (ASPO) is threefold: 1) to promote the exchange and dissemination of information and ideas relating to cancer prevention and control; 2) to identify and stimulate research areas in transdisciplinary cancer prevention and control; and 3) to foster the implementation of programs in cancer prevention and control (1). Three defining features of the Society are: focus on transdisciplinary research, interaction between members within Special Interest Groups, and encouragement of career development activities (2). Since its inception in 1976, seven Special Interest Groups have formed within ASPO: Chemoprevention, Molecular Epidemiology, Tobacco, Diet & Nutrition, Screening, Behavioral Oncology & Cancer Communication, and Junior Career Development. At this year's annual meeting on March 2–4, 2007 in Houston, Texas, ASPO officially added two new Special Interest Groups - Cancer Survivorship and International Cancer Prevention. The report addresses the rationale for developing the Cancer Survivorship Special Interest Group.

Impetus for the Survivorship Interest Group

Statistics regarding the burden of cancer are well known. The high frequency of diagnosis combined with improved survival has led to unprecedented prevalence. In the United States, over 4.7 million men and 5.4 million women are living with a cancer diagnosis (3). These numbers are expected to increase in the future as baby boomers reach the age ranges where cancer incidence rates are highest (4). The five-year survival rate for all cancers combined is 66%, up from only 35% in 1950 (3). In recognition of the large number of individuals now surviving cancer for long periods of time and their unique and poorly understood needs, the Office of Cancer Survivorship was established in July 1996 by the National Cancer Institute (NCI; ref. 5). A similar recognition of the dearth of evidence regarding the phase of care that follows primary treatment was expressed in

the recent Institute of Medicine report, "From Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Transition." (4).

Definition of Survivorship

The NCI Office of Cancer Survivorship supports the following definition of *cancer survivor*, adapted from the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship: "An individual is considered a cancer survivor from the time of diagnosis, through the balance of his or her life. Family members, friends, and caregivers are also impacted by the survivorship experience and are therefore included in this definition." (5). ASPO Survivorship Special Interest Group (SIG) members also support this definition. Cancer patients may experience multiple survivorship trajectories, such as periods of time characterized by therapy, surveillance or watchful waiting, cancer persistence or recurrence, and survival in the absence of active disease (4, 6, 7). ASPO Survivorship SIG members believe that the cancer control continuum inherently includes those trajectories (8).

Mission of the Cancer Survivorship Interest Group

At the 2007 ASPO meeting, a group of interested ASPO researchers met for an early morning breakfast to chart the strategic goals of the new Cancer Survivorship SIG. An important part of our meeting was reviewing current US forums for presentation of cancer survivorship research and other professional society survivorship interest groups that have emerged over the past few years.

To capitalize on the transdisciplinary nature of ASPO, we defined the mission of the new SIG: We seek to foster transdisciplinary collaborations for informing survivorship research with the overall goal of reducing cancer burden. Implementation of the mission will involve: educating scientists, policy makers, advocates, and laypeople regarding the nature and scope of survivorship research; highlighting transdisciplinary survivorship research; emphasizing a common language to improve communication; fostering and increasing the number of people involved in cancer survivorship research, care, and education; and potentially informing policy.

Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev 2007;16(9):1912–3
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doi:10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-07-0773

Our SIG will work to develop and incorporate symposia and presentations on survivorship research into future ASPO meetings. We identified three priorities: 1) To create a forum for discussion and collection of appropriate intermediate survivorship endpoints, risk communication and survey instruments to be available for use across projects; 2) To compile a list of existing cancer survivorship cohorts and their study instruments that might be used for survivorship research to increase efficiencies of previously collected data; this compilation will encourage collaboration and add value to current studies; and 3) To link with other associations (e.g., the American Society of Clinical Oncology and the American Association for Cancer Research), organizations (NCI Office of Cancer Survivorship, cooperative groups) and interested parties (cancer center directors) as well as colleagues in other disciplines (e.g., neurology, obstetrics, occupational and physical therapy, cardiology) to disseminate information to members regarding research priorities, common interests, and opportunities for collaboration.

For more information regarding activities of ASPO's Survivorship Interest Group, please contact Diana Buist, PhD (buist.d@ghc.org). To join the American Society of Preventive Oncology, please

contact Heidi Sahel (hasahel@wisc.edu; Tel 608-263-9515, www.aspo.org).

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