



HEALTH AWARENESS

Reducing The Risk Of Chronic Conditions

(NAPSA)—Good news when it comes to childhood cancers in the U.S.: Today, nearly 80 percent of children and adolescents diagnosed with cancer become long-term survivors as a result of advanced treatments. In fact, medical experts predict that within five years, one in every 250 young adults will be a childhood cancer survivor.

Unfortunately, there may also be some bad news concerning the long-term survivors of childhood cancer, according to a recent study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

Researchers retrospectively tracked the long-term health status of more than 10,000 adults diagnosed with childhood cancer between 1970 and 1986 who survived at least five years and compared the results with their siblings. The study showed that survivors had a significantly higher rate of illness from chronic health conditions than their siblings and that cancer treatments necessary for survival were linked to the development of serious health problems.

As a group, adult survivors of childhood cancer were eight times as likely as their siblings to have severe or life-threatening chronic health conditions; for example, heart attack and heart failure, second cancers and severe changes in mental function. Almost three-fourths of them were found to have a chronic health condition, and 40 percent a serious health problem. The study's findings underscore the necessity of continued health monitoring of survivors of childhood cancer, with an emphasis on screening for second cancers,

BEYOND *The* CURE

The vast majority of children diagnosed with cancer will survive the disease. They do, however, need to monitor their health as adults.

heart, kidney and lung disease, and hormonal problems.

"The impact of some of these health problems can be reduced with periodic survivor-focused follow-up," says Dr. Kevin Oeffinger, a researcher at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York and lead author of the study. "Cancer survivors need to realize that some of these conditions can be prevented and many can be reduced in severity."

The risk of future complications can be further reduced if survivors understand the type of cancer they had and the treatment received, as well as adopt a healthy lifestyle, Oeffinger adds.

Beyond the Cure, a program of The National Children's Cancer Society, was created to provide helpful information for survivors of childhood cancer via educational materials, workshops and teleconferences.

To hear more from Dr. Oeffinger regarding medical late effects of childhood cancer, visit the Beyond the Cure Web site at www.beyondthecure.org and click on the teleconferences menu for the session entitled "Chemotherapy, Radiation and Your Long-Term Health."