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LOSING YOUR MARBLE(S): A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF PSYCHOSOCIAL OUTCOMES IN AUSTRALIAN TESTICULAR CANCER SURVIVORS

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Although > 95% of men with testicular cancer (TC) are cured, many experience ongoing physical and psychological effects related to diagnosis and treatment. This large study is the first to use a validated measure of TC-specific quality of life (QOL) to assess the long-term sequelae of TC.

Aims: To determine the prevalence/severity and correlates of impaired QOL, psychological distress, and unmet needs in Australian TC survivors.

Methods: Men who had completed active treatment for TC 0.5–5 years previously, showing no evidence of recurrence, were recruited from 14 Australian cancer centres. Participants completed a questionnaire measuring demographics, disease and treatment information, general (SF36v2) and TC-specific (EORTC QLQ-TC26) QOL, psychological distress (DASS21) and unmet needs (CaSUN).

Results: 244 of 486 eligible TC survivors participated. Compared to age adjusted Australian general population norms, TC survivors an average of 2.3 years post-treatment reported significantly higher levels of depression ($p = 0.003$, mean difference = 2.43, 95% CI 0.82, 4.04) and anxiety ($p = 0.007$, mean difference = 2.46, 95% CI 0.69, 4.24), lower mental QOL ($p < 0.001$, mean difference = -6.85, 95% CI -8.47, -5.24) and marginally higher physical QOL ($p = 0.036$, mean difference = 0.99, 95% CI 0.07, 1.91). The most commonly reported TC-specific QOL issues were anxiety about cancer recurrence and the future generally, plus the impact of TC on sexuality and fertility. Almost a quarter (22–23%) of TC survivors reported unmet needs relating to these issues. Variables most strongly associated with outcomes were: a helpless/hopeless adjustment style with depression ($p < 0.001$, $B = 1.27$, 95% CI 0.89, 1.65) and poorer mental QOL ($p < 0.001$, $B = -1.23$, 95% CI -1.83, -0.63); more severe treatment side effects with anxiety ($p < 0.001$, $B = 0.14$, 95% CI 0.09, 0.20); and more job problems with poorer physical QOL ($p < 0.001$, $B = -0.12$, 95% CI -0.17, -0.07).

Conclusions: Australian TC survivors have relatively good physical QOL, but suffer from ongoing impaired mental QOL and psychological distress. Effective management of side effects and intervention to reduce helplessness/hopelessness may facilitate better adjustment.