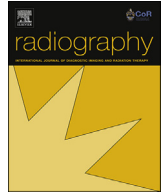




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Support needs of adolescents' post-cancer treatment: A systematic review

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The study aimed to investigate the support needs for adolescents' post-cancer treatment. **Materials and methods:** A systematic literature review was conducted, articles were obtained from the following databases, Science Direct, PubMed and SCOPUS. Additional studies were identified from the reference lists of articles included in the review.

Results: 119 articles were identified as potentially relevant, of these, a total of 16 articles were nominated to be included in the review for analysis.

Conclusion: The role of relationships and key workers were important to enabling survivors to self-manage. Studies have commended the role of friendships during the cancer treatment process but also as a means to coping with issues relating to survivorship. Using a coping mechanism thought to be beneficial by the survivor often improves their overall wellbeing. The eagerness to continue a normal successful life post-cancer treatment seems to be over-shadowed by the fear of not being able to conceive offspring. This, in turn, can impact the psychological wellbeing of survivors, thus signifying the need to develop ways in supporting these individuals. With research into quality of life (QoL) and survivorship issues continuing to progress and reach new heights, there is still much to be done.

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Introduction

In the United Kingdom, it is estimated that 2300 adolescents aged between 15 and 24 years old are diagnosed with cancer each year.¹ Due to the advancements in cancer treatment, there have been notable improvements regarding the survival of persons diagnosed with cancer during adolescence.² Cancer Research UK reports that the 5-year survival rate amongst adolescents and young adults (AYA) is approximately 80%.¹ Therefore, it is crucial to recognise 'survivorship' as a unique stage of the cancer trajectory.³

Transition into life after cancer, side effects from treatment and anxiety of the risk of a recurrence can inflict different emotions and require different levels of support to meet the needs of the individual.³ A study uncovered the significance of alopecia on a person's self-perception which in turn promotes body image dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and many other characteristics that are prevalent among AYA currently undergoing cancer treatment.⁴

Although some of the psychosocial pressures begin to ease post-cancer treatment, further problems arise long-term that gravely

affect the mental health of AYA cancer survivors.⁵ Long-term AYA cancer survivors report a higher incidence of anxiety and depression, which impedes on their ability to gain employment or educational credentials.⁵ As the burden of cancer remains, the safeguarding of the survivors' QoL has become increasingly important and plays a fundamental role in the evaluation of cancer therapy.⁶

The aim of the systematic review is to clarify the needs of AYA post-cancer treatment and exploring the support options available.

Research methodology

The electronic databases Science direct, PubMed and SCOPUS were reviewed, these particular databases were chosen due to their accessibility of numerous peer-reviewed journals. The use of Boolean operators allows the author to narrow the search to retrieve articles most relevant to the research question.⁷

Search terms

The search terms included combinations of the following phrases or keywords: "adolescents OR young adults OR teenagers" AND "support needs OR quality of life OR support available OR psychosocial support" AND "post-cancer treatment OR after cancer".

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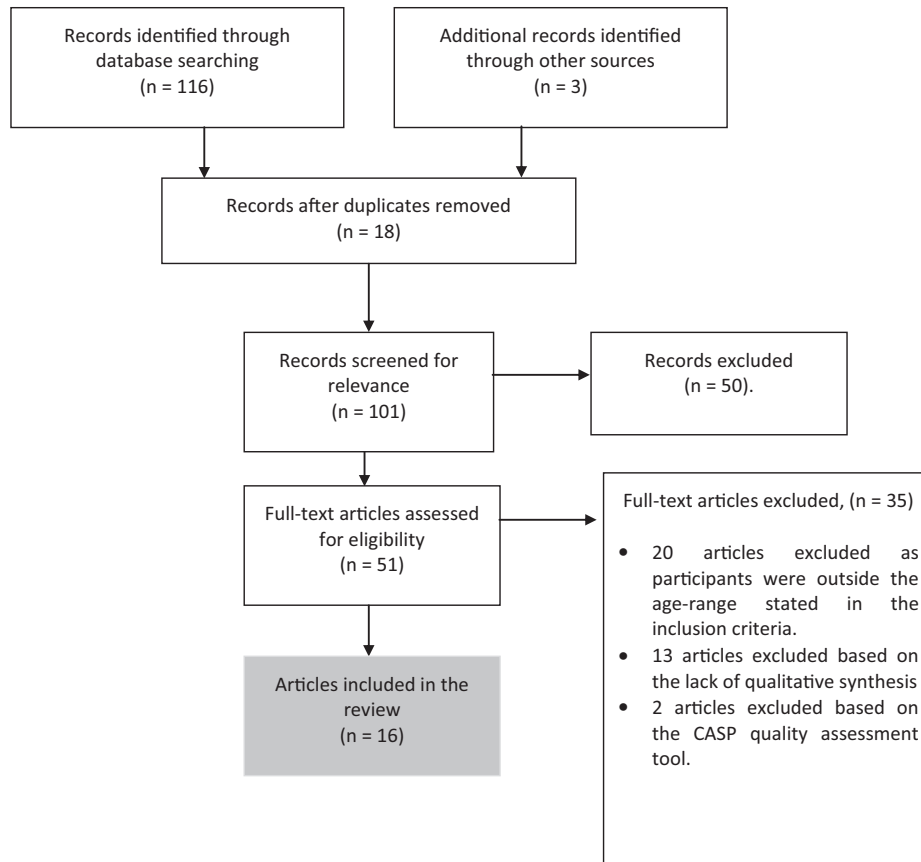


Figure 1. Outcome of the search strategy and the decision-making model.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria included articles: (1) published in English; (2) in a peer-reviewed journal; (3) access to full text; (4) published between January 2004 and August 2016.

Exclusion criteria: (1) participants outside the age constraints (12–26 years old); (2) the studies aim not directly relevant to core concepts of support needs, QoL or support availability for AYA post-cancer treatment; (3) lack of qualitative synthesis.

Search strategy and selection process

Reference lists of selected papers were reviewed for additional articles that may be pertinent to the study and seen as a necessary step when conducting a review.⁸ Grey literature also provides a sound grounding on the current understanding of issues around

support post-cancer treatment.⁸ Hence the inclusion of key documents relating to AYA survivorship will be included in the review.

All articles included in the review were subject to attaining ethical approval. Ethics play a vital role in ensuring all researchers are held accountable to upholding the rights and dignity of participants in their research, this is especially important due to the vulnerability of the participants in question.⁹

The quality assessment tool used is the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) that will determine the final selection of articles.¹⁰ The series of questions used to appraise each article were taken directly from the CASP tool and can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

A total of 16 papers were nominated to be included in the review for analysis (see [Fig. 1](#)).

Results

No	Author	Study type	Methods	Sample Size.	Age range of participants. (years)	Key findings
1	Barr et al. (2016)	Narrative review	The study reviewed a variety of issues ranging from financial issues, psychological support, sexuality and body image with the aim to consider the opportunity for progress.	–	–	Establishing a discrete AYA oncology discipline with related training programs necessary for health care professionals to attending to challenges facing AYA at any stage of the cancer journey. The introduction to community-led or internet-based initiatives that recognise that access to quality care for AYA is a right, not a privilege.

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