Transforming care: Development and application of the needs assessment tool for colorectal cancer survivors (NeAT-CC)

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia's multi-ethnic society, living beyond colorectal cancer brings challenges that extend far beyond the clinical setting. We asked: what are the most pressing needs of survivors, and how do these differ across cultural, financial, and treatment-related contexts? Between 2022 and 2024, we co-developed and validated a culturally grounded assessment tool with survivors and healthcare professionals so that it could ask the right questions. The tool was deployed in a nationwide survey of over 600 adults across public and private oncology centres. Findings revealed consistently high needs especially around healthcare access, emotional support, and practical challenges of survivorship. Needs were not evenly distributed with certain demographic and clinical subgroups of patients displaying higher vulnerabilities, pointing to gaps that current systems may overlook. This study offers a rare, structured look into what it means to survive cancer in Malaysia and invites new thinking on how to shape more responsive, equitable survivorship care.

Keywords: Survivorship, colorectal cancer, needs assessment, cancer survivors