

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  CAUSECAST

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Changing Cancer Treatment, Care and Support for Young People

Part of being young includes constantly defining oneself. It also means puberty, your first job, first kiss, college, living on your own or even marriage. However, the immortality that we feel by being young can often cast a shadow on what it means to be young with cancer.

Today cancer treatment has accelerated to improving the survival for many patients. Yet, we still do not have a cure nor does a cure appear to be in sight. Instead organizations around the world have begun to shine light on a component of cancer care which has also proven to be just as important as treatment: the psychosocial aspect of care.

The National Cancer Institute has defined this age group falling between the ages of 15 and 39. We do know that young people with cancer have a higher risk factor for delayed cancer treatment, discrimination based on age and often lack resources such as psychosocial therapy and fertility preservation. The incidence for young people with cancer has risen in the US to nearly 70,000 out of 1.4 million cancer diagnoses every year.

The reality is that little attention is given to young people under the age of 40 who have cancer. Many young people with cancer face transition issues such as secondary cancer, fertility complications, and leading an independent life.

What all these organizations share in common is that they recognize by being a young person with cancer, you have unique needs, which differ from pediatric, adult and geriatric cancer patients.

Young people are more inclined to have breast cancer, thyroid cancer, blood cancers, genital tumours, melanoma and brain tumours than any other age group. In fact, melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, is the most common cancer in women ages 20-29, and is the biggest cause of cancer deaths in women ages 25-30

This is why we are excited to announce the launch of an International Charter of Rights for Young People with Cancer. It is an international collaborative effort between the Teenage Cancer Trust, SeventyK, Lance Armstrong Foundation, CanTeen Australia and CanTeen New Zealand which is calling on the international community to recognise, act, and improve cancer care for young people.

The charter developed through a collaborative effort between cancer patients, advocates, survivors, friends and families affected by cancer. We are now working with hospitals and policy makers to adopt this Charter, which, we believe, truly outlines the downfalls in cancer care.

Although the charter was created to represent the needs of young people with cancer, we have found that it resonates beyond this group, to caregivers, health professionals, and advocates who have seen a young person they know battle cancer and lack the rights outlined in the charter. Therefore our target audience goes beyond patients and survivors to reach the general public. We believe anyone can appreciate a young cancer patient deserves the right to proper care for their disease and we urge you to sign this charter. With a growing number of supporters we believe we can take this initiative to hospitals, governing health bodies and national governments in order to help implement the policies which improve the way we support young people with cancer.

We ask you to join us in this cause and visit www.cancercharter.org and sign the charter in support of giving young people the rights they deserve during their cancer care.