

# The role of social work in the long-term care of childhood cancer survivors: a literature review

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## Introduction

Childhood cancers are neoplasms diagnosed between ages 0 and 19. Five-year survival of childhood cancer survivors has improved from 50% in 1975 to 80% in 2014 (1, 2). The number of childhood cancer survivors has hence increased, with 270,000 individuals in USA alone in the year 2010.

Childhood cancer survivors face unique psychosocial adversities in education, employment, disability, daily functioning and interpersonal and romantic relationships. Ideally social workers should be part of the multidisciplinary teams involved in service to childhood cancer survivors.

## Objectives

The purpose of this narrative review was to provide an understanding of the role of social work in the long-term care of childhood cancer survivors as reflected in the academic literature.

## Methods

A comprehensive literature search was conducted in both the medical and the social work literature.

Databases used included ProQuest Social Services Abstracts, OVID versions of Medline, Embase, Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials and PsycINFO. Subject headings and keywords such as 'neoplasms', 'cancer', 'pediatric', 'survivor', 'social work', 'social casework', 'social workers', etc., were used.

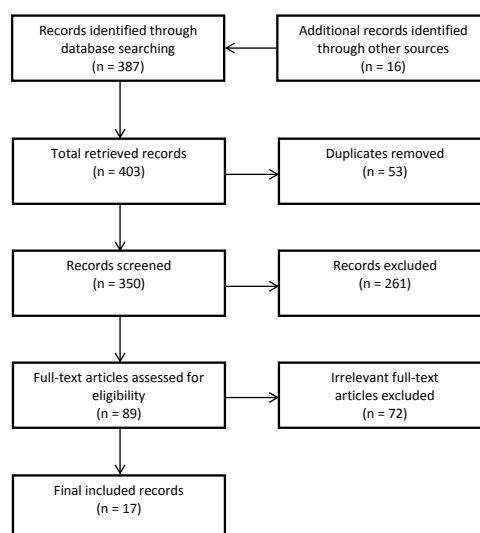
## Results

A total of 17 relevant studies were identified after careful examination of full texts. Our review demonstrated that social work provides valuable assistance to childhood cancer survivors in the following five categories: participation and leadership role in multidisciplinary follow-up service; provision of psychotherapy and counseling; assistance with returning to school; promotion of self-advocacy, empowerment and resources referral; and quality of life research and assessment.

## Conclusions

The literature suggests social work plays an invaluable and integral role in the long-term multi-disciplinary follow-up of childhood cancer survivors. The peer-reviewed literature on this topic remains limited and is without large scale experimental studies. Future multicentre trial is necessary to establish scientific evidence.

Research Process Flowchart



## References

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2. Ward, Elizabeth, Carol DeSantis, Anthony Robbins, Betsy Kohler, and Ahmedin Jemal. 2014. "Childhood and adolescent cancer statistics, 2014." *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians* 64 (2):83-103. doi: 10.3322/caac.21219.