

HIGHLIGHTING SPECIAL NEEDS OF AYAs WITH GYNECOLOGICAL CANCER

Naoko KODAMA ,RN,CNS (Department of nursing, Juntendo University Hospital, Tokyo)



Background & Objectives

- Young adult women (20–39 years) diagnosed with gynecologic cancer face unique challenges: balancing cancer treatment and hope for life events (career development, wish to get married, wish to have childbirth), and coping with current and future situations, including both the threat to life and the loss of fertility.
- As a result, these patients experience psychological stress from changes in identity, relationships, and future plans.
- Their support needs are not well understood in Japan, despite the significant impact on life plans and self-esteem^[1].
- In Japan, many studies on AYA (Adolescent and Young Adult) have focused on the perspective of nurses, and few studies have directly examined patient voices.

Study Design

Participants: Recruited 5 to 10 gynecologic cancer survivors aged 20 to 39 who had been diagnosed with gynecological cancer and were hospitalized for treatment.

Method: Semi-structured interviews to explore **patients' experiences** and **support needs**.

Analysis: A flow chart outlining the study design.

Results	Challenges	Patients' Experiences	Support Needed	Findings:Implications
Life vs. Fertility	Forced to choose between survival and the ability to have children	Difficult decisions, regret	Early, clear information	Worry about losing the ability to have children arises only when faced with that possibility
Physical & Emotional Changes	Struggle with unexpected post-surgical changes and long-term side effects.	Unexpected side effects, anxiety	Pre/post-op counseling	Severe physical changes after surgery are distressing
Identity & Relationships	Cancer and infertility disrupt self-image and relationships.	Loss of self-esteem, isolation	Peer and psychosocial support	Illness prompts self-reflection and changes in outlook
Nursing Relationship	Nurses are vital, but patients feel mixed emotions—trust in experienced nurses, resistance to care from younger nurses.	Trust in experienced nurses, mixed feelings about young nurses	Consistent, empathetic care	Nurses play a crucial role, but patients feel incomplete and sometimes resist young nurses
Peer Support	Patients use hospitals for medical issues, peers for emotional support.	Emotional sharing with survivors	Access to patient groups	Patients use hospitals for medical issues, peers for emotional support

Characteristics of study participants

- 9 Female patients
 - Cervical cancer 6 Pts
 - Ovarian Cancer 2 Pts
 - Endometrial Cancer 1 Pts
- Diagnosed in late teens to 30s.
- 1–11 years passed from **diagnosis of cancer**.

Conclusions

- AYAs with gynecological cancer have complex, evolving support needs.
- Effective care requires understanding their ambivalent feelings and providing the right support at the right time.
- Multidisciplinary, patient-centered approaches can improve quality of life and mental health outcomes^{[2][1]}.

Acknowledgement:

We express our heartfelt gratitude to Professor Minako Morita, President of Japanese Red Cross College of Nursing, Professor Mitsuko Yoshida, and Associate Professor Yoshie Higuchi for their expert guidance and generous support. We are also deeply grateful to the representative of the cancer support group and the nine gynecologic cancer survivors who participated in this study and courageously shared their experiences. This research would not have been possible without their contributions.

Ambivalent Feelings About

Support (Patients' experiences)

- Want support, but not special treatment
- Do not want pity, but want understanding
- Prefer not to discuss painful topics, but desire normal conversation
- Support needs change over time; unmet needs lead to feeling unsupported

Support Needs

- **Before Treatment:** Clear information about treatment and its impact on fertility and sexuality
- **After Treatment:** Ongoing support for life planning, body image, and mental health
- **Communication:** Patients want empathy but not pity, and support tailored to their changing needs

Implications for Supportive Care

- Long-term, individualized support is essential
- Address both medical and psychosocial needs (fertility, self-esteem, relationships)
- Multidisciplinary teams and peer support are effective
- Nurses and healthcare providers need training to recognize and respond to AYA-specific issues^{[2][3]}

Reference

1. <https://doi.org/10.5630/jans.43.1>
2. <https://www.jmaj.jp/detail.php?id=10.31662%2Fjmaj.2021-0106>
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Email address:
naosuga@Juntendo.ac.jp