

Optimizing an EHR Screening Workflow to Identify Parents with Cancer to Deliver Supportive Care

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Background

When parents are diagnosed with cancer – balancing treatment and child caregiving – it is termed “cancer parenting.” Consistent with NCCN guidelines for distress management, cancer parenting should be screened for and parents offered supportive care. Clinics vary in assessing parenthood and distress due to limited time and resources. Including household data collection within the EHR and delivering supportive care when parenthood is identified are critical to improving affected parents’ quality of life.

Methods

At an NCI-designated cancer center serving N>5,000 adult patients with cancer annually; 50% female, 44% non-White, 10% Latine. We developed a cancer parenting screening item for inclusion in the EHR (Cerner) to determine if patients with cancer were also a parent to ≥ 1 child (age < 22). Clinical workflows were optimized for, and with the help of, medical assistants and nursing staff to incorporate household information into oncology outpatient visits. Data were abstracted from the EHR to describe the prevalence of cancer parenting over 2.5 years; focus groups were conducted with cancer parenting families to assess supportive care needs/preferences.

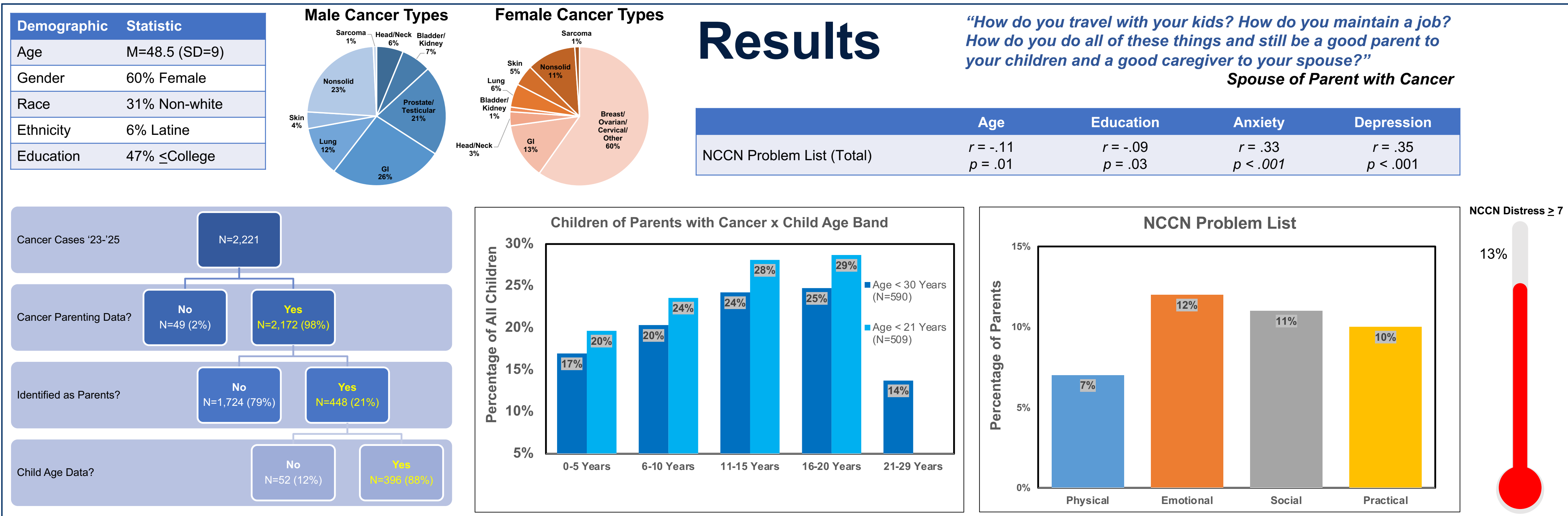
Results

Of the N>2,000 active cancer cases seen at one hospital between 2023-2025, 98% reported their parenting status: 21% identified as parents and 88% reported on their children’s ages. These parents were raising a combined N>500 children: most children were preteens or teens (57%). On the NCCN Distress Screen, 13% of parents scored ≥ 7 (“distressed”): Emotional, Social, and Practical problems were more commonly endorsed over Physical problems. Parents’ age and education levels were inversely associated with problems; anxiety and depression were positively associated.

Conclusions

Optimized EHR workflows can effectively identify parents with cancer, and the prevalence of cancer parenting is high. Systematically assessing, advising, and referring parents with cancer to supportive resources can address psychosocial burdens of cancer parenting to improve quality of life.

EHR Screening for Cancer Parenting is Feasible, Acceptable, and Actionable



Universal Screening for Cancer Parenting in the EHR

General Information

Verification of Patient ID

Information Given By

Reason for Visit

Preferred Method of Learning

Interpreter provided by MedStar?

Interpreter ID/Number & Comments

Reason Information Not Obtained

Chaperone Name

Title of Chaperone

Preferred Language for Discussing Healthcare

Please answer for all GUH/WHC patients with active cancer diagnosis. Patient is a parent/caregiver with child/ren <22 years of age.

Scan Me



Lab



Presenter



Poster