

Good News Dept.

What Follows After Surviving Childhood Cancer

(NAPSA)—The prognosis has improved for children with cancer. Many pediatric and adolescent forms of the disease now have a 75 to 80 percent cure rate, according to The Journal of the American Medical Association.

Doctors caution, however, that cancer survivors can face chronic health problems later in life. In fact, up to 75 percent have osteoporosis, cognitive disorders or other issues, according to The New England Journal of Medicine. Such findings have led to an emerging field of medicine called cancer survivorship, which focuses on the treatment and experiences of people who have lived through cancer.

It's practiced at the Aflac Cancer Center and Blood Disorders Service of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, where a team of doctors follows nearly 1,000 childhood and adolescent cancer survivors in search of ways to improve their continued health care and quality of life.

"Many survivors do not know they could have a concise, portable summary of their cancer care that includes recommendations for long-term follow-up," explains Lillian Meacham, M.D., medical director for the Cancer Survivor Program at the center. "It's a tool that can significantly aid in their future medical care." Dr. Meacham holds the Kathelen V. Amos Children's Chair for cancer survivorship.

Dr. Meacham says the center's cancer survivor team does not diagnose or treat cancer. Instead, it works in tandem with oncologists to diagnose late effects as early as possible. If adverse health conditions are found, the team facilitates treatment from appropriate specialists. The information culled



An emerging field of medicine is addressing many of the long-term health issues faced by childhood cancer survivors.

from those efforts is recorded in what's known as a Survivor Healthcare Plan (SHP), which helps guide the patient's health care for the rest of his or her life.

Currently under development is an Internet-accessible network of the state's cancer survivors and their SHPs called SurvivorLink. It will provide survivors and health care professionals throughout Georgia—and potentially beyond Georgia—access to electronic survivorship records.

That access could help health care providers add medical information to a survivor's health record and update his or her "problem list"—a tool that's been invaluable to the survivorship team at Aflac Cancer Center in tracking and understanding the late effects of cancer therapy.

For more information, visit www.aflac.com and www.aflaccancercenter.org.