

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: A Photovoice Exploration and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Childhood Cancer Survivorship into Adulthood

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PAGES: 153

This study explored adult childhood cancer survivors' experiences with illness and survival. Currently, there is an abundance of medical and physiological research regarding childhood cancer survival into adulthood, including the physical late effects of the disease treatment. There is, however, a limited understanding of if and how childhood cancer survivors make meaning of their illness and how this contributes to their psychosocial functioning, including posttraumatic stress and/or posttraumatic growth. Using a qualitative technique known as photovoice, participants of this study described their experiences with illness and survival via visual story telling. A total of 8 (7 females, 1 male) adult survivors of childhood cancer completed the photovoice protocol and a team of researchers engaged in an interpretive phenomenological analysis of the verbal and visual data. Three themes with accompanying subthemes were identified and include biopsychosocial stressors, meaning-making, and posttraumatic growth. The interactions of these themes revealed that childhood cancer survivorship into adulthood is anything but a linear model of recovery after biological cure of the disease. Specifically, the participants' reported continuous biopsychosocial stressors from the onset of the illness, including a cyclical meaning-making process that contributes to these

stressors. Each participant, however, also experienced a degree of posttraumatic growth. A developmental, contextual model for the experience of childhood cancer survivorship into adulthood is proposed. Clinical implications for how healthcare professionals could theorize and understand the development and transition of childhood cancer patients into adulthood, as well as future research directions are discussed.