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PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF HEALTHY-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE ON CHILDREN WITH NEWLY DIAGNOSED CANCER AND THEIR FAMILY

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Aims: To assess healthy-related quality of life and psychosocial adjustment in children with newly diagnosed cancer and their parents immediately and 6 months after diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

Method: A prospective, case control study was conducted on eighty-nine children with newly diagnosed cancer, aged between 6 months to 16.7 years (mean, 8.2 years), and ninety healthy children of matched age group and social background. The children were assessed with the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), and the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) and the SF-36 questionnaire were administered to their parents immediately after diagnosis of cancer, 3 months after chemotherapy, and 6 months after chemotherapy.

Results: No matter at the period immediately after diagnosis of cancer, 3 months or 6 months after starting chemotherapy, the parents of children with cancer scored significantly worse on every domains of SF-36 except body pain and every subscales of PSI except distractibility/hyperactivity and attachment when compared with the control group. The cancer group scored consistently lower on all CBCL syndrome scales than the control group, with anxiety, depression and body pain being significantly different. After starting chemotherapy, the parents reported improved scores on quality of life and decreasing parenting stress in both parent and child domains since 3 months or 6 months after starting chemotherapy.

Conclusion: Considerable distress was experienced by both children with newly diagnosed cancer and their parents during the period immediately after diagnosis. However, parents can adjust gradually since 3 months after starting chemotherapy and experience improved quality of life.