

CANCER JOURNEYS

A Twice-a-month column from
Fighting Chance

U.S. Congress Aims to Strengthen Support for Cancer Survivors



Diagnosis

Emotional Impact

Treatment/Side Effects

Survivorship

Patient Stories

Survivorship Counseling at Fighting Chance

When Fighting Chance opened 20 years ago, our first hire was Karrie Robinson, LCSW, who had been an oncology social worker at Memorial Sloan Kettering and in charge of its “post treatment” unit.

In other words, Karrie was counseling patients who had entered the “Survivorship” phase of their cancer journey. They had successfully completed their treatment, but they were in need of counseling to help maintain their mental health.

Fighting Chance was created to support and counsel newly diagnosed cancer patients on the East End, but we knew from the outset that survivorship was an important step along the journey and it was our job to be there, with our patients, for the long haul.

Our Pamphlets for Patient Use

By 2015, about 25% of our work was with patients whose cancer was in remission. These patients were hungry for counseling and support as they transitioned to the “new normal.” To help them, we put out a pamphlet of tips and action items.

In 2019, we opened a new office at the Phillips Family Cancer Center in Southampton and created a 2nd Survivorship pamphlet for SBSH patients.



Congress Proposes Legislation

Today, the issue of Cancer Survivorship is front and center on the national stage. On December 14, 2022, members of the U.S. Congress introduced a new piece of legislation, with bipartisan support, known as the “Comprehensive Cancer Survivorship Act” (CCSA).

The proposed legislation would address current gaps in survivorship care and develop standards to improve the overall patient-centered quality of care and navigation needs of cancer survivors, their families and caregivers - - from diagnosis to end of life.

The Survivorship Planner

The “Survivorship Planner” is a pivotal figure in the new legislation, and so far, not defined. Unlike social workers who must have both undergraduate and graduate degrees, no specific training is required of a planner. Simply stated, the field of survivorship planning has not yet been “professionalized.”

That may change once a funding source for this cancer care service materializes. And perhaps the most important part of the legislation is its proposal that the work of these planners be eligible for Medicare reimbursement.

Today there are 18 million cancer patients in remission. Taken together, they are this nation’s survivorship constituency and their needs, as well as activism, are expected to grow.

In the meantime, counseling at Fighting Chance remains free of charge; health insurance and/or Medicare is not required.

Fighting Chance has offices in
Sag Harbor and at the
Phillips Family Cancer Center
in Southampton.

For more details, or information
please call **631 725 4646**

Visit our website at
www.fightingchance.org

FIGHTING CHANCE: FREE CANCER COUNSELING & RESOURCE CENTER