

Abstract

Background:

Since cancer patients have a higher expected life span after their treatments with advanced medicine, fertility preservation (FP) treatment has become a critical issue for consideration. For patients of reproductive age, especially for adolescent and young adult (AYA) patients, adequate information and consultation of FP may be a crucial element as well as their cancer treatment. This study aimed to understand the support needs of AYA cancer patients in the process of decision-making in regards to whether they would undertake FP for their future.

Methods: We performed a qualitative study comprising content analysis of written responses from an open-ended question regarding FP support needs that was obtained from a Japanese nationwide survey of cancer patients who had reproductive ability at the time of their cancer diagnosis. This qualitative evaluation included participants of the survey who had a cancer diagnosis at less than 40 years of age and responded to the open-ended question.

Results: Of the 565 participants who met the age inclusion criteria, 342 participants provided a response to the question. A total of 443 codes were extracted from the written responses. Those codes were then amalgamated into 41 subcategories of distinct topics. Understanding the relationships between these topics resulted in formation of 9 categories addressing over-arching topics, including “Strengthening the information provision”, “Appropriate response from Oncologist”, “Enhancement of consultation”, and “Collaboration between Oncologist and Reproductive specialist” as the most common categories.

Conclusion: AYA cancer patients need adequate quality and quantity of information, as well as need communication with their oncologists and reproductive specialists in their decision-making process of FP.

Keywords: AYA, cancer, fertility preservation, reproductive, content analysis