

Young Adults' Perceptions of the Venturing Out Pack Program as a Tangible Cancer Support Service

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This research was funded by a grant from the Quebec Nursing Intervention Research Network in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Tsimicalis and Loiselle contributed to the conceptualization and design. Wazneh completed the data collection. Tsimicalis provided statistical support. Wazneh, Tsimicalis, and Loiselle contributed to the analysis and manuscript preparation.

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Submitted March 2015. Accepted for publication June 7, 2015.

Key words: quality of life; supportive care agents; adolescents; young adults; cancer; tangible

ONF, 43(1), E34–E42.

doi: 10.1188/16.ONF.E34-E42

Purpose/Objectives: To explore the extent to which contents contained in a backpack called the Venturing Out Pack (Vo-Pak) assist in meeting the practical, psychosocial, and informational needs of young adults (YAs), as well as how the Vo-Pak could better meet the needs of YAs.

Research Approach: Qualitative, descriptive.

Setting: A university-affiliated adult hospital cancer center in Montreal, Quebec.

Participants: 12 YAs treated for cancer.

Methodologic Approach: One-time, individual, semistructured interviews. Verbatim transcripts underwent thematic analysis.

Findings: Participants viewed the Vo-Pak as a welcoming, ready-to-use, timely package that met many cancer-related needs. The Vo-Pak contains three kits: the Hospital Comfort Kit, which was seen as a hands-on resource that provided quality products; the Venturing Out Kit, which was viewed as a catalyst for connecting with others; and the Friends of Lara Information Kit, which assisted participants in locating relevant support resources. Participants recommended earlier delivery and broader dissemination of the Vo-Pak program.

Conclusions: This program adds value to efforts to enhance cancer care for YAs. Integrating participants' recommendations contributes to the overarching goal of comprehensive person-centered care to an underserved segment of the cancer population.

Interpretation: The Vo-Pak program could be optimized by re-engaging healthcare professionals in its broader dissemination. Champions may be added to optimize the successful implementation of tangible support programs. YAs seem eager to connect with peers. The Vo-Pak can be instrumental in facilitating these connections and enabling these exchanges.

The young adult (YA) patient group has been increasingly recognized as a distinct entity with specific needs within the cancer community (D'Agostino, Penney, & Zebrack, 2011; De et al., 2011; Ramphal et al., 2011). Researchers have found that some of the informational, psychosocial, and practical needs of this population remain unmet and recommend additional research to understand members' unmet needs (Palmer, Mitchell, Thompson, & Sexton, 2007; Patterson, Millar, Desille, & McDonald, 2012; Ramphal et al., 2011; Taylor, Pearce, Gibson, Fern, & Whelan, 2012; Zebrack et al., 2013). Although initiatives to address these needs may lead to positive outcomes, such as improvement in psychosocial well-being (Zebrack et al., 2013), the supportive care of YAs remains suboptimal and, therefore, has become a national priority.

Founded in 2001 by cancer survivor Doreen Edward, Venturing Out Beyond Our Cancer (VOBOC) is a nonprofit charitable organization based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, that is committed to providing adolescents and YAs (AYAs) with tangible support services (VOBOC, 2014). VOBOC's Venturing Out Pack (Vo-Pak) is a free backpack containing tools and resources to help AYAs throughout their cancer trajectory (VOBOC, 2014). The Vo-Pak program