

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF SURVIVAL OF CHILDHOOD CANCER

M. Servitzoglou¹, D. Papadatou², M. Gerali³, I. Tsiantis⁴, H. Kosmidis³

¹*2nd University Department of Pediatrics, Children's Hospital 'P. & A. Kyriakou' C* ²*Nursery Department,*

University of Athens ³*Oncology Department, Children's Hospital 'P. & A. Kyriakou' C*

⁴*Department of Child's Psychological Health, Children's Hospital 'Agia Sofia', Athens, Greece*
marservi@ath.forthnet.gr

Objectives: To investigate if survivors of childhood cancer are characterized by an increased tendency for anxiety, isolation but also, to explore the impact of the disease on their life.

Methods: 95 survivors were examined. A sample of 100 young people was used as control.

- a) The Spielberger questionnaire was used for assessing anxiety. The State subscale refers to anxiety as presenting condition and the Trait as personality trait.
- b) From the SF-36 quality of life instrument, we measured the subscale of social functioning.
- c) In a semi-structured questionnaire, survivors analyze the way in which cancer has influenced their life.

Results: Anxiety is present in a significant percentage of this population. The mean scores for both subscales are higher in survivors, especially in Trait, which is more representative of anxious personality.

In terms of sociality, there is not any statistically significant difference between the two samples.

Survivors feel they are different from other people of the same age, sometimes in a positive way. They feel that disease has changed their attitude on life and their goals.

Conclusion: The experience of cancer in childhood changes the whole life of survivors, making them more vulnerable to stress. Survivors attribute some positive outcomes to their experience, such as their early maturation, their greater interest for other people and their ability to fight for their goals.

