

Cancer and Cancer Treatment-Related Cognitive Impairment: Mechanisms and Management

Principal Investigator: Diane Von Ah, PhD, RN, FAAN

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Funding Agency: Walther Cancer Foundation

Abstract:

Cancer survivorship begins at the time of a cancer diagnosis and extends through the balance of an individual's life. The number of cancer survivors in the U.S. has tripled in the past 30 years and is expected to increase by 2% annually. Cancer survivors and their families face ongoing physical, psychological and social challenges as a result of their diagnosis and treatment. The discipline of nursing brings a holistic, patient-centered approach to research and clinical practice that focuses on patients' responses to disease and treatment rather than on the disease itself. Because of this approach, nursing is the ideal discipline to prepare researchers to advance the science to prevent, assess and intervene to reduce the negative physical, psychological and social responses to cancer and cancer treatment. However, the number of nurse scientists in the field remains small. The Indiana University School of Nursing has a cadre of nurse scientists dedicated to conducting multidisciplinary, multi-site research with survivors with a range of cancer diagnoses and their family caregivers, in underrepresented populations, across all phases of the survivorship trajectory.

The goal of the proposed three-year Cancer Survivorship Grant is to provide the primary investigator, Diane Von Ah, PhD, RN, FAAN, dedicated time and program manager support to lead a program of research in cancer survivorship that 1) evaluates physical, psychological and social responses to cancer and cancer therapy over time and 2) develops interventions that prevent and manage negative responses to cancer and cancer treatment, which will ultimately improve the quality of life of cancer survivors and their families.

For the proposed focused plan of research, Dr. Von Ah will be responsible for overseeing program staff and the following processes: (1) identifying key collaborative relationships to form a core interdisciplinary team focused on cancer survivorship; (2) leveraging existing resources (e.g. data, personnel, internal funding mechanisms, etc.) to obtain requisite preliminary data; (3) leading submission for externally funded research in cancer survivorship research; (4) developing a plan for dissemination of findings through poster and paper presentations at professional meetings; and peer-reviewed journal publications and (5) leading efforts on the local and national level to implement evidence into clinical practice.