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It made me think a little different” – a qualitative study of young adult cancer survivors’ experiences of cognitive therapy in cancer rehabilitation

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Background: Young adult cancer survivors (YACS) are a small and understudied group, with increased risk of late-effects. Cognitive therapy (CT) is a promising intervention to enhance coping in survivorship, but research into CT interventions and how YACS experience these are lacking. Thus, the objective of this study was to explore YACS’ experiences of CT in a rehabilitation program.

Methods: The study applied a phenomenological-hermeneutical approach, including 17 YACS who completed a six-month rehabilitation program, including CT. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and the transcripts were analyzed using Systematic Text Condensation.

Results: The analyses revealed two main themes and three corresponding subthemes. The first theme, ‘CT as a tool’, was elaborated by the subthemes ‘education and practicing’, ‘follow-up’ and ‘internalization’. The second theme, ‘the perceived usefulness of CT’, was clarified by the three subthemes ‘changed thought patterns’, ‘insight and acceptance’ and ‘handling a new life-situation’.

Conclusions: The participants experienced CT as a useful tool in their rehabilitation process, dependent upon education, practicing and follow-up before it could be internalized. Additionally, the YACS expressed that CT changed their thought patterns and helped them achieve insight and acceptance as an important basis to handle their new life-situations. The results cannot be generalized, and further research is warranted.

Biography

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