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Prioritising the psychosocial needs of young oncology patients: a call for comprehensive care

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To the Editor—We write in response to an article published in November 2023 on digital media that discussed the difficulties faced by local young cancer patients who are receiving oncology treatment.¹ We would like to highlight the importance of addressing these challenges and propose solutions to help overcome them.

In 2021, young oncology patients comprised up to 4.1% of all cancer cases in Hong Kong.² They experience a range of emotional, social, and financial challenges that greatly impact their overall well-being. Neglecting their needs not only strains their relationship with family, but also hampers their ability to effectively cope with the disease. The financial toxicity of cancer treatment, which includes the expenses, indirect costs and lost income associated with cancer treatment, further exacerbates these challenges.^{3,4}

To address these issues effectively it is essential to provide services specifically designed for young cancer patients according to their stage of development. They are at high risk of psychosocial problems and should be prioritised for early integration into palliative care services to improve their quality of life and that of their family.⁵ Mental health professionals and support groups should be widely available for psychological support. Some medical allowances and social services are provided only for the older adults. Medical-social collaboration and educational resources could improve access by young adults to community support. Additionally, implementing targeted financial assistance programmes and providing employment support will help alleviate the financial burden. It is crucial to recognise and address the obstacles faced by young cancer patients.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the concept or design, acquisition of data, analysis or interpretation of data, drafting of the letter, and critical revision of the letter for important intellectual

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