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Quality of life among disease-free survivors of rectal cancer.

Rauch P, Miny J, Conroy T, Neyton L, Guillemin F.

Surgical Department and Medical Oncology, Centre Alexis Vautrin, 54511, Vandoeuvre les Nancy, France.
p.rauch@nancy.fnclcc.fr

PURPOSE: To identify factors affecting the quality of life (QoL) of disease-free survivors of rectal cancer. **PATIENTS AND METHODS:** One hundred twenty-one patients in complete remission more than 2 years after diagnosis were asked to complete three QoL questionnaires: the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) QLQ-C30; its colorectal module, QLQ-CR38; and the Duke generic instrument. **RESULTS:** Patients reported less pain ($P = .002$) than did controls drawn from the general population. EORTC QLQ-C30 physical scores were also higher among rectal cancer survivors than in the general Norwegian or German population ($P = .0005$ and $P = .002$, respectively). Unexpectedly, stoma patients reported better social functioning than did nonstoma patients ($P = .005$), with less anxiety ($P = .008$) and higher self-esteem ($P = .0002$). In the present authors' experience, the QLQ-CR38 does not discriminate between these groups. Residual abdominal or pelvic pain and constipation had the most negative influence on QoL. **CONCLUSION:** QoL is high among rectal cancer survivors, including stoma patients. Simultaneous use of several QoL questionnaires appears to have value in follow-up and in monitoring the effects of therapy. The impact of residual pain and constipation on long-term QoL should be considered when establishing a treatment regimen.