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Social networks and quality of life among female long-term colorectal cancer survivors.

Sapp AL, Trentham-Dietz A, Newcomb PA, Hampton JM, Moinpour CM, Remington PL.

University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Center, Madison, Wisconsin 53726, USA.

**BACKGROUND:** The population of long-term colorectal cancer survivors in the United States continues to increase, but little is known about how they fare-physically, mentally, or socially-in the years after diagnosis. The current study examines female long-term colorectal cancer survivors' health-related quality of life (HRQoL) in relation to social networks. **METHODS:** A population-based sample of female colorectal cancer survivors (n = 726) residing in Wisconsin was recontacted approximately 9 years after the initial diagnosis. Of 443 women who were alive in 1999, 307 women completed a follow-up questionnaire. Analysis was conducted on 259 participants who completed the Medical Outcomes Study Short Form 36 Health Status Survey and a modified version of Berkman and Syme's Social Network Index. Using multivariate analyses, HRQoL summary scores were tested for associations with individual and composite measures of social networks, including marital/partner status; number of children, relatives, and friends; and the frequency of religious and community participation. **RESULTS:** After adjusting for age, extent of disease at diagnosis, number of comorbidities, body mass, and education, HRQoL was similar to norms published for the general population. Individual social network measures (including the number of relatives and friends) and composite network measures (including network size, the number of ties seen at least once per month, and overall social connectedness) were associated positively with mental health. **CONCLUSIONS:** Social networks may have an important relation with HRQoL-particularly mental health-among female long-term colorectal cancer survivors. The results of this study should be of interest to those seeking to understand or improve HRQoL among this growing population. Copyright 2003 American Cancer Society.

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