

# Pushing your doctor for a survivorship care plan

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We have received several comments about the new trend and recommended practice of survivorship plans for patients following cancer treatment. By way of background, there has been a widening recognition that cancer patients are lost in the shuffle after a diagnosis of cancer and when they go back to their regular life and routine medical care.

Given the growing number of cancer survivors and more awareness of the need for special types of monitoring for long-term side effects, several organizations like the Institute of Medicine and the American Society of Clinical Oncology have made recommendations to develop treatment summaries and survivorship plans for patients and their primary care providers.

Several contributors to the [CURE Message Board](#) have weighed in that while they believe survivorship plans are good ideas, they are not getting a welcome reception from their doctors. Others have commented that their own research and thoughts about cancer treatments are dismissed by their oncologists.

It turns out that doctors and the medical field in general are vulnerable to the same inertia that we all experience when it comes to change. Two decades ago, it was unheard of for doctors to explain the pros and cons of their treatment recommendations in detail or to solicit opinions from their patients regarding alternative approaches.

Centering care around the patient is a welcome trend, but it is still young. The field of survivorship has matured in part due to the growing voice of patient advocates who pressured the government and other agencies to increase research funding and services for those living with or after cancer. The fruits of awareness and research are now being evidenced by new guidelines for survivorship. But change in physicians' attitudes can be slow, but I suspect that survivorship plans, even with input from patients themselves, will soon become routine.

There are well over 10 million survivors in the U.S. so every physician needs to have knowledge on monitoring and addressing problems that can arise. Oncologists will not be able to follow all their patients long-term with the looming shortage of cancer specialists and increasing complexity of cancer treatments. So the movement toward survivorship wellness will clearly continue and will be further refined not only by the medical field, but also by patients and the public--perhaps even through CURE's message board.