

# Coping Mechanisms Employed by Young Cancer Survivors and Their Caregivers

## Authors and Affiliation

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## Background

Psychosocial strain and financial distress are common among adolescent and young adult (AYA) cancer survivors and their caregivers. Coping strategies play a critical role in mitigating the impact of financial toxicity in these populations. Financial toxicity refers to economic and damaging effects of cancer treatment, both direct and indirect costs, that impact a cancer patient's quality of life.

## Objectives

To identify the coping strategies used by AYA cancer survivors and caregivers.

## Methods

This cross-sectional survey utilized Louisiana Tumor Registry to identify and recruit eligible survivors diagnosed with cancer between the ages of 15 to 39 during 2010 to 2020. Participants completed two instruments assessing coping behaviors: 1) Cancer Behavior Inventory – Brief Version (CBI-B) and 2) cost-related coping items from Medical Expenditure Panel Survey.

## Results

We received 65 completed surveys from AYA survivors and 17 from their caregivers (CG). The mean CBI Score was 79.15 among AYAs and 77.65 for caregivers (range 1 to 108), indicating a moderate coping self-efficacy. Both groups reported high self-efficacy in healthcare decision-making. AYAs expressed lower self-efficacy in domains related to social support and social networks while caregivers expressed low levels in managing side-effects, stress and distress, and maintaining activities and independence. Common cost-related coping strategies for both groups included delaying large purchases, reducing spending on basics (food, clothing, etc.), using saving or retirement for medical expenses, and reducing spending on vacations.

## Conclusions

These findings highlight several opportunities for tailored interventions. AYAs may benefit from interventions that reduce barriers to engaging with support networks and strengthening psychosocial support during survivorship. Caregivers require interventions focused on training with symptoms management, caregiver stress, and strategies to maintain independence.

## Recommendations

Louisiana survivorship should incorporate both AYA and caregiver-related resources designed to address coping needs and financial support across survivorship.

## IRB

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