



MARYLAND

Maryland Forum Honors and Educates Cancer Survivors

Each year, more than 24,000 Marylanders are diagnosed with invasive cancer. About 7% of adults in Maryland were cancer survivors in 2009 and, as death rates decrease, the number of cancer survivors increases.*

Cancer survivors deal with many difficult issues, including getting lifesaving and evidence-based cancer care, as well as care for treatment-related side effects and mental health problems. Many of the stresses cancer survivors face can be reduced or eliminated with the help of mental health, legal, and financial services; peer support networks; and patient education conferences.

As better treatment slows the progress of cancer, more people are living longer as survivors. However, resources and support are needed to help them maintain their quality of life after cancer. In addition to the direct cost of medical care and wages lost due to illness, cancer patients must pay for related expenses such as high insurance deductibles, transportation to treatment, and mental health services.

The Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan (MCCCCP) has a goal of enhancing cancer survivors' quality of life through information and supportive services. Many strategies address this goal, including the organization of a statewide event to celebrate National Cancer Survivors Day and raise awareness about survivors' needs.

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<http://fha.dhmh.maryland.gov/cancer/cancerplan/SitePages/Home.aspx>

*Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Center for Cancer Surveillance and Control. Available at <http://fha.dhmh.maryland.gov/cancer/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

On June 4, 2011, more than 300 people—including more than 200 cancer survivors—gathered in Baltimore, Maryland for Beyond Cancer: A Cancer Survivorship Forum. The forum was the result of a partnership between the MCCCCP and the Prevention and Research Center at Mercy Medical Center, organized to honor National Cancer Survivors Day and provide education about survivorship issues.

The forum featured presentations about survivorship trends and research, offered practical take-home information, and gave survivors an opportunity to connect with one another. One keynote speaker focused on survivorship care and research; the other focused on the cancer experience from a patient's perspective. Activities to help with emotional well-being included a demonstration by a representative from a Buddhist center in Baltimore on the benefits of mindful meditation and a workshop on stress reduction and music therapy.

Other workshop topics included managing treatment side effects, complementary medicine, legal and insurance issues, balancing work and life after treatment, exercise and nutrition, and genetic testing. The forum ended with a cancer survivor reception.

The forum educated participants about cancer survivors' needs. According to participant evaluation forms, participants' knowledge increased by 26%, the overall forum was rated 4.7 out of 5, and all presenters received effectiveness scores of very good or higher. The positive feedback shows that large educational survivorship programs are both necessary and effective. The MCCCCP hopes to repeat the forum annually as part of a larger awareness campaign around National Cancer Survivors Day.

As death rates decrease, the number of cancer survivors increases. In 2009, about 7% of Maryland adults were cancer survivors.

