

## Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) — Experiences with Cancer Survivorship Supplement Applied Research Program

### Overview of the MEPS

The Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) is a nationally representative survey of the civilian noninstitutionalized population in the U.S. Conducted by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the MEPS collects comprehensive data on health care insurance, access to care, utilization and expenditures. Data are collected over five rounds of in-person interviews that cover a consecutive two-year period. Overlapping panels can be combined for calendar year estimates. Each MEPS panel is a subsample of the prior year National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) respondents.

### What is the MEPS Experiences with Cancer Survivorship Supplement?

The National Cancer Institute is collaborating with the American Cancer Society (ACS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), LIVESTRONG, and the AHRQ to provide supplemental funding to the MEPS to improve the quality of data for estimating the cancer survivorship burden in the U.S. Using responses to the NHIS question about cancer diagnoses, households with cancer survivors were oversampled for selection in the MEPS.

Additionally, this collaborative group developed a targeted questionnaire, Your Experiences with Cancer, to further understand the burden of cancer, its treatment and impact on access to health care, the ability to work and participate in usual activities, health insurance, and quality of care. The questionnaire was completed by approximately 1600 cancer survivors, which

represents a 91% response rate among MEPS participants. The questionnaire is also being fielded by LIVESTRONG in 2012, with more than 5,000 respondents to date.

### What Types of Studies Could Be Done with the MEPS Cancer Survivorship Supplement?

Availability of these data will allow scientists to use the MEPS data for many types of studies of the burden of cancer in the United States. Studies can be either cross-sectional or longitudinal across the MEPS interviews. Participants in the MEPS can also be linked back to their data in the NHIS.

Specific cancer survivorship research questions that can be addressed with the MEPS data and data from the supplemental questionnaire include:

- financial burden;
- access to medical care;
- employment and employment patterns;
- health care utilization and expenditures;
- prescription drug use.

### When Will the Data Be Publicly Available?

Data from the Experiences with Cancer questionnaire will be available to the public in 2013. However, data from the 2010 MEPS are currently publicly available for researchers. Please see the MEPS Web site (<http://meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/>) for more information.

## Why Is This Research a Priority for NCI?

A major component of the NCI's mission is measuring and understanding the burden of cancer and its care in the U.S. To help fulfill this mission, the Health Services and Economics Branch within the Applied Research Program supports the development and dissemination of data resources, survey and measurement techniques, and analytical methods with the goal of improving the quality of research in this field and ultimately reducing the burden of cancer to patients, their families, and society.

The SEER-Medicare linked database (<http://healthservices.cancer.gov/seermedicare/>) is a major data source for studies of cancer care and descriptive and treatment-specific cost estimates. These data come from 1) the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) program of cancer registries that collect clinical, demographic, and cause of death information for persons with cancer; and 2) the Medicare claims for covered health care services from the time of a person's Medicare eligibility until death.

However, estimates from SEER-Medicare are based on the elderly population. Additionally, SEER-Medicare does not include information about health care coverage from payors other than Medicare, including private payors, Medicaid, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and patient out-of-pocket payments. National information about costs of care in younger cancer survivors, and comprehensive information about all types of health insurance in cancer survivors of all ages, is lacking.

The ability to utilize the MEPS data to better understand the burden of illness in cancer survivors will help to address these research gaps and complement existing research resources. Because MEPS respondents are a subsample of the NHIS, these data can also be linked to the core NHIS and the

2010 NHIS Cancer Control Supplement, yielding some of the most comprehensive publicly available longitudinal data for measuring burden of cancer in the U.S. across multiple domains (Yabroff et al., 2012). Ultimately, findings from the MEPS Experiences with Cancer Survivorship Supplement can be used by policymakers, health care systems and providers, and employers to improve the cancer survivorship experience in the U.S..

Reference: Yabroff KR, Dowling E, Rodriguez J, Ekwueme DU, Meissner H, Soni A, et al. The Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) Experiences with Cancer Survivorship Supplement. *J Cancer Surviv* 2012;6(4):407-419.

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