

## Abstract

The current study examined websites and brochures to determine and identify the emotional support networks that exist for young adult LGBTQ with cancer. Using content analyses, the researcher coded themes of support groups online and in the Edmonton community. Although no sources could be identified that were established specifically for young adult LGBTQ cancer survivors, the findings revealed 21 resources appropriate for young LGBTQ adults and/or young adults with cancer as described herein.

## Introduction

Young LGBTQ cancer patients are at a unique intersection of marginalization. While also at a higher risk of cancer in some instances, the needs of the young and queer cancer patient goes beyond the medicinal field (Boehmer, 2011). Support groups and services play an important role in these situations, and are essential in alleviating emotional distress and establishing positive coping mechanisms. While peer support groups are beneficial, they are limited in their ability to meet all needs. Professional help must also be offered and readily available for those who need it. With a spike in cancer diagnoses, the need for an inclusive spectrum of supports arise.

Increasingly, supports and resources target either paediatric or senior patient care. An overlooked and underserved demographic, adolescent and young adult patient needs are often neglected. Given the transitional stage in their lifetime, this group faces unique barriers in their care and aid. As such, the need for psychological and emotional support for adolescents and young adults is amplified. Navigating the obstacles associated with being a member of the LGBTQ community, coping with adolescence, as well as managing a cancer diagnosis would be difficult to handle alone. The objective of this research is to find and identify peer or professional support networks that exist for adolescent and young adult LGBTQ cancer patients, both online and in the Edmonton community.

## Methods

A content analysis was conducted of both online and offline resources. The online data was found using three Google searches. The first of these searches contained the key terms "Edmonton", "LGBTQ", and "resources", which resulted in the discovery of two master lists from that itemized the supports available for the LGBTQ community in Edmonton. The first master list revealed nine relevant sources, and the second master list provided two relevant sources. A second Google search was conducted with the terms "Edmonton", "cancer", and "support". This search revealed three relevant online cancer specific resources. The last Google search was conducted using the key terms "LGBTQ", "Cancer", and "Canada". This search displayed a list from an art-based research project, which catalogued the resources available to LGBTQ individuals with cancer. This site revealed five appropriate resources. Offline, the primary researcher visited the Cross Cancer Institute and accessed the resources available at the centre, and collected brochures and pamphlets from three different organizations.

## Results

Table 1

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| The Compass Centre                     | Provides professional counselling on a number of issues, including those of sexual/gender identity through a live chat.   | <a href="http://www.compasscentre.ca/services/counselling/">http://www.compasscentre.ca/services/counselling/</a>   |
| Youthspace                             | Provides e-counselling by professionals as well as live chats with a trained volunteers and peer forums.  | <a href="http://youthspace.ca">http://youthspace.ca</a>   |
| Association of Cancer Online Resources | A compilation of 142 online peer cancer-specific discussion boards. Also contains communities discussing treatment, side effects, recovery, and quality of life.  | <a href="http://www.acor.org">http://www.acor.org</a>   |
| Cancer Survivors Networks              | A peer discussion board regarding not only specific LGBTQ cancer survivors, but patients as well.   | <a href="http://can.cancer.org/node/185289">http://can.cancer.org/node/185289</a>   |
| John Hopkin's Breast Cancer Center     | Provides professional question and answer services mainly about breast cancer. However, there is link for psychological support.  | <a href="http://www.hopkinsbreastcenter.org/services/ask_expert/psychological_support/">http://www.hopkinsbreastcenter.org/services/ask_expert/psychological_support/</a> |
| National LGBT Cancer Project           | An online peer discussion board support group specifically for LGBTQ patients.  | <a href="http://glbcancer.org">http://glbcancer.org</a>   |
| National LGBT Cancer Network           | A cycle of 12 week professional online support forums. 3 different forums exist: one for lesbian and bisexual women, a forum for gay and bisexual men, and a forum for transgender and gender variant people with cancer. | <a href="http://cancer-network.org/programs/support-groups-for-survivors/">http://cancer-network.org/programs/support-groups-for-survivors/</a>                           |
| Young Adult Cancer Canada              | A professional question and answer service specific to young adults.  | <a href="http://www.youngadultcancer.ca/need-to-yacc/">http://www.youngadultcancer.ca/need-to-yacc/</a>   |
| Canadian Cancer Society                | Peer discussion boards on information and support for a multitude of topics.  | <a href="http://cancerconnection.ca">http://cancerconnection.ca</a>   |
| Cancer Support Community               | Provides both professional and peer support through instant chats with trained staff. 2 discussion board: the Living Room, for anyone with cancer and the Group Loop, specific to teens.                                  | <a href="http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org/find-support">http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org/find-support</a>   |
| Cancer Chat Canada                     | A professionally led support group for cancer patients to access emotional support.   | <a href="https://cancerchat.desouzainstitute.com">https://cancerchat.desouzainstitute.com</a>   |
| Stupid Cancer                          | Peer support forums targeting young adult cancer patients.  | <a href="http://stupidcancer.org/community/">http://stupidcancer.org/community/</a>   |

Table 2

|                                    |   |  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| The Compass Centre                 | Provides professional counselling on a number of issues, including those of sexual/gender identity in person.   | Address: #703, 10050-1125t Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J1<br>Phone: 780-423-3737  |
| Edmonton Pride Centre              | YouthSpace offers peer aid through multiple support groups. Some of these include the Women's Group, the Men's Group, and the Transgender, Transexual, Intersex, and Questioning (TTIQ) Group | Address: 10608 - 105 Avenue Edmonton, AB T5H 0L2<br>Phone: 780-488-3234  |
| OUTreach                           | A social group that offers weekly meetings and support for LGBTQ individuals at the University of Alberta. Not limited only to students   | Address: SUB 0-68D University of Alberta 8900 - 114 Street NW Edmonton, AB T6G 2J7   |
| The Landing                        | Provides drop in hours for LGBTQ individuals in a peer support environment.   | Address: 0-68A Lower Level Students' Union Building University of Alberta 8900 - 114 Street NW Edmonton, AB T6G 2J7<br>Phone: 780-492-4949 |
| CHEW Project                       | A peer to peer social group for trans and gender diverse youth.   | Address: 5-186 University of Albert 7-104 Education North T6G 2G5<br>Phone: 780-263-2221   |
| The Family Resilience Project      | A trans & gender questioning peer support group for youth under 25 as part of the Family Resilience Project, conducted by the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Studies.              | Address: 5-109 University of Alberta 7-104 Education North T6G 2G5<br>Phone: 780-248-1971  |
| The Cellar Youth Centre            | Provides drop in mentoring from professional community youth workers as well as a variety of other supports for at risk youth.  | Address: 13407 97 st Edmonton, AB T5E 4C7<br>Phone: 780-437-3000   |
| Canadian Mental Health Association | Provides drop in single session counselling to anyone who needs it. Provided by students doing their Masters or PhD in counselling.   | Multiple addresses, call 211 Or visit <a href="http://dropinyeg.ca">dropinyeg.ca</a>   |
| Wellspring Edmonton                | A peer to peer social group for cancer patients. Contains general group supports as well as a young adults cancer support group.  | Address: 11306 65 Ave NW Edmonton, Alberta T6H 2Z8<br>Phone: 780-758-4433  |
| Alberta Health Services            | The Department of Psychosocial and Spiritual Resources offers individual counselling as well as support groups for cancer patients in multiple cancer centres.                                | Multiple addresses, call 811   |

Table one includes online support groups identified while Table two categorizes the community-based supports. Of all the resources examined, only 2 contained information specific to both LGBT and cancer support care. The online supports contained discussion boards, forums, chat rooms, and question and answer services. 12 of the resources were peer supports, 7 of them were professional, and 2 sources offered both peer and professional assistance. A few of the sources overlapped and appeared in multiple lists. The primary researcher grouped and divided the relevant data into the community based supports and the online support. Website links, addresses, and phone numbers were noted, as well as including a brief description of the programs provided.



Source: <https://redbubble.com>

## Conclusions

The findings indicate that there are a limited amount of resources available, and that specific support groups for these patients do not exist. The resources that do exist are broader community-based or online supports. These relevant findings may be helpful to patients who wish to connect with others going through similar circumstances or to access professional counselling and therapy. This research has implications pertaining to the psychosocial care of LGBTQ youth struggling with cancer. Although there are broader support groups, the need for specialized assistance in Edmonton and in online communities still stands. As previous literature and research states, there are disparities in the healthcare system for young LGBTQ patients with cancer. These gaps in the mental and emotional well being of these patients might be mitigated by the use of more specific support groups. Through establishing those groups, young LGBTQ patients with cancer may be comforted by relating to others and having access to professional counselling that deals with a myriad of issues equally.

## Reference

Boehmer, Ulrike. (May 9, 2011). Cancer Survivorship and Sexual Orientation. American Cancer Society. 117 (16), 3796-3904. DOI: 10.1002/cncr.25950

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