**Re: Long-Term Psychosocial Outcomes Among Bereaved Siblings of Children With Cancer**

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To the Editor:

With great interest, we read the study by Rosenberg et al.[1](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib1) about psychosocial well-being among bereaved siblings of children with cancer. The authors report valuable findings about the prevalence and determinants of psychosocial outcomes beyond 10 years of bereavement in these siblings. They suggest that there seems to be a time frame in which siblings are very vulnerable, which is during and immediately after the illness experience or death. Consequently, only a few siblings reported ongoing negative sequelae.

We recently evaluated the well-being of siblings from parents' perspectives, both during the palliative phase and after a median follow-up time of five years (3–8 years). This evaluation was part of a study exploring parents' perspectives of [pediatric](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#200002505) palliative care.[2](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib2) For this study, we asked parents who lost a child to cancer between 2000 and 2004 to retrospectively complete two statements about the well-being of siblings both during the palliative phase and at the time of completion of the questionnaire. Parents of 123 of 135 children were eligible for this study; 68 parents completed both statements about siblings' well-being. The first statement was “In general my other children have experienced a lot of problems in the period before and after the death of their brother or sister”; the second statement was “In general my other children still experience negative consequences as a result of the death of their brother or sister.” Parents were asked to rate both statements on a five-point [Likert scale](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#200000764), ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree).[2](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib2)

In total, 29 of 68 parents (43%) (somewhat) agreed with the statement that their other children had experienced a lot of problems in the period before and after the death of their brother/sister. Interestingly, most parents mentioned that the siblings still experienced negative consequences after a median follow-up time of five years (31 of 68 parents [46%]). Results are shown in [Table 1](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#tbl1).

The present findings show that, according to parents, nearly half of the bereaved siblings still experienced negative consequences of the child's loss, even after many years. This outcome seems in contrast with the results presented by Rosenberg et al,[1](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib1) who concluded that siblings generally recover over time, although it was noted that the majority of them remain affected by the loss.

Until now, the number of studies exploring long-term adjustment of bereaved siblings has been limited, and the studies lack conclusive evidence about the psychosocial adjustment of siblings after the death of a brother or sister with cancer.[3](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib3), [4](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib4), [5](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib5)and[6](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib6) Gaining knowledge about long-term adjustment of siblings is important to be able to adequately meet their needs.

Support for bereaved siblings might be organized in the future according to the Pediatric Psychosocial Preventative Health Model described by Kazak et al.[7](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib7)and[8](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib8) A comprehensive study should investigate whether outcomes would fit the model, in terms of having a larger proportion of children in the group not experiencing many negative consequences (universal level), some siblings at a higher risk for [psychopathology](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#200002765) and in need of more targeted care (targeted level), and lastly, a small group at the highest risk and in need of intensive treatment (clinical level).[7](https://vpn-gw.erasmusmc.nl/%2BCSCO%2B00756767633A2F2F6A6A6A2E667076726170727176657270672E70627A%2B%2B/science/article/pii/S0885392415000664?np=y#bib7)

In conclusion, according to our findings, negative consequences of the child's loss still occur in bereaved siblings, even many years later. Although here we report the findings of a small evaluation and we did not use validated instruments to measure the siblings' well-being, the findings are valuable in stressing the need to support siblings, which could improve future pediatric palliative care. Considering the impact of the loss of a child, upcoming studies should focus on developing supportive intervention strategies for siblings and exploring whether a potential effect of intervention strategies is sustained over time.

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