

## Breast Cancer Survivorship Support Services: Evaluation of the Thriving Again Survivorship Program

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### Abstract

While a breast cancer diagnosis can be daunting for women of any age, studies have shown that young breast cancer survivors exhibit more emotional and psychological distress because of their relatively young age and life stage at diagnosis. In September 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funded seven organizations, including Sharsheret, a national not-for-profit organization supporting young Jewish women and their families facing breast cancer, to develop support services and educational awareness activities for young breast cancer survivors. With this funding, Sharsheret developed the Thriving Again@ survivorship program, which provides support services and resources, including a tailored survivorship kit with a survivorship care plan template, exercise DVD and healthy living cookbook. Participants were asked to complete an evaluation of services received to further enhance the program.

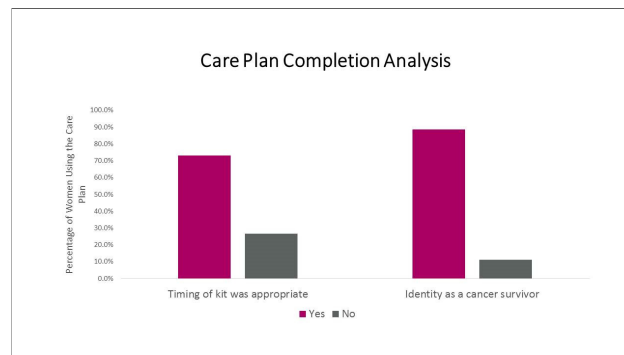
### Methods

Breast cancer survivors who received a Thriving Again survivorship kit were asked to complete an online or paper survey evaluating Sharsheret's survivorship support services. Among 972 women who received the Thriving Again survivorship kit and were invited to complete an evaluation, 164 women returned the evaluation survey and 85 completed it in its entirety. Descriptive statistics on demographics and factors related to utilizing the survivorship care plan template and Sharsheret's services were calculated and analyzed. The small sample size limited additional analyses.

### Results

Of the 85 women who completed the survey, 46% were  $\leq 45$  years of age and 43% were of Jewish descent. 62% of respondents reported that they received the kit and care plan template at the time they needed it most in their survivorship journey. These women more often reported completing their survivorship care plan template either themselves or with a member of their medical team. Care plan completion was also high among women considering themselves as "survivors" (89%).

The vast majority of women participating in the Genetics for Life@ program (76%) had spoken with a Sharsheret clinical team member at the time they ordered their Thriving Again kit. Other factors, such as stage at diagnosis and age, were unrelated to use of the care plan and Sharsheret's programs.



### Conclusions

Although breast cancer survivors may identify themselves as "survivors" at any point post-diagnosis, women responding to the survey who were satisfied with the timing of receiving the Thriving Again kit during their survivorship journey and who self-identified as a "survivor" were more likely to complete the care plan template. Women who reviewed the kit and learned more about Thriving Again@ with a member of Sharsheret's support team were more likely to engage in other Sharsheret programs, most notably, Genetics for Life.

Although the sample size was small, the findings from this evaluation may be helpful to other survivorship programs.

Most notably, other programs may need to be aware of how patients perceive themselves as survivors and offer care plans and resources when patients feel they most need them, even if patients have not yet completed treatment.

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