Fertility preservation discussion in young adults with cancer: How often are we documenting?

INTRODUCTION

- Infertility is a major consequence of cancer treatment.
- The NCCN guidelines for adolescent and young adult and ASCO clinical practice guidelines recommend fertility counseling in all the new patients with cancer prior to initiation of treatment.
- The discussion done with the patient regarding fertility preservation should be documented in the medical record system.
- The clinician should initiate a referral to fertility preservation clinic without delay for all the patients who choose the options for fertility preservation.
- Fertility preservation is currently one of the least implemented services in young adults with cancer.
- As a quality improvement initiative, we examined the rate at which documentation of fertility preservation discussion is done in young adults with cancer.

METHODS

- The patients between the ages of 18 and 45 years seen in the oncology clinic from January 1, 2018 to August 31, 2019 as a new patient or who underwent hematopoietic stem cell transplantation during this period were included in the study.
- We also performed a survey among the health care providers regarding their knowledge and practice on fertility preservation counseling.

RESULTS

- The result is summarized on Table 1.
- According to the survey, majority of the clinicians discuss and document the fertility preservation counselling less than half of the time.
- The main reason of not discussing was mentioned as urgency of starting therapy, cost, lack of information and insufficient time in the clinic.

DISCUSSION

- The barrier we identified were - lack of knowledge on various fertility preservation options among health care professionals, lack of standard approach and unclear referral guidelines, and unclear roles of various health care providers.

CONCLUSION

- Moving forward, having a multidisciplinary team approach, mapping out the current practice and identifying gaps and getting output from reproductive and endocrine experts can be instrumental on improving the fertility preservation counselling.
- Educating the providers on various options available on fertility preservation, having a clear and timely referral process, and identifying the clear roles of various health care providers will help to improve the discussion and documentation of fertility preservation counselling on young patients with cancer prior to initiation of cancer treatment.