Of 39 mother-father pairs whose infant required respirator support, 18 participated in a group decision with their physician to withdraw respirator support when the prospects of infant survival seemed hopeless (limited respirator care group). No significant differences in parent grief scores were found (t tests) when the limited respirator care group was compared to those parents of infants who died despite uninterrupted respirator care. Our data suggest that informed parents can participate as partners with their physician in difficult infant care decision, even when death results, and adjust to their loss with healthy grieving.


Parents of 191 children who were treated for cancer over a seven-year period completed and returned a questionnaire concerning marital status. Contrary to the prediction of a high divorce rate among these families, the study found a person-year divorce rate of 1.19%. This is slightly lower than the 2.03% person-year divorce rate among married couples with children in the states of Kansas and Missouri. The Arnold sign indicator analysis of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory was used to measure marital stress in 38 intact couples whose children were treated for cancer. The study sample experienced more stress than a comparison group of 23 couples who had hemophilic children. Both of these populations had more stress than a normal standardization group, but less than a standardization group of marriage counselees.