



STOP CANCER – A paradigm shift for young cancer patients

“At the peak of life, when everything was coming to a head, or maybe just starting out, I was diagnosed with cancer. In that moment, my life changed.”

We understand how it is because it happened to us as well. We felt the skies crumbling down, the paralyzing fear and helplessness. We didn't know what to do either. We also believed that *'It would never happen to us'*. But that is precisely why we can help, as we listen to you and really understand what it means to have cancer when you are young. (An exert from the online StopCancer community)

Who we are

Halasartan aka StopCancer was founded in 2017, inspired by Tal Jacobson who passed away from cancer at the young age of 26. At the time, Tal felt incredibly lonely, as if she was the only young person in Israel to have had cancer. Yet statistics show that 10 young people (aged 18-44) are diagnosed with cancer in Israel, every single day.

Our nonprofit was founded by Tal's parents to ensure that no young person would ever have to face cancer alone. We do this by strengthening and empowering the active Halasartan community. Enabling those who are sick or recovering to have a healthy community life, feel united and together not only define their unique needs in life affected by cancer, but most importantly create solutions to those problems.

These young people have unique needs, vital aspects of their lives are affected by the disease: sexuality; self-esteem and body image; fertility; relationships; early parenthood; and employment. The heart of our nonprofit organization is an active entrepreneurial community of 30,000 cancer patients and survivors, 75% of which are women, navigating the different stages of their journey; from diagnosis, through treatment and recovery, to returning to life cancer-free. Community members alleviate solitude through extensive online and face-to-face encounters and activities.

In 2020, Halasartan was awarded the Sussman-Joint Award for responding to loneliness and mental health issues arising from social distance and isolation.

In addition, for the past three years, the innovative solutions and services initiated by the community have been acquired by the National Insurance Funds, the JDC and Israel's national HMOs.

The Challenges we Solve

These young patients and survivors face exceptional challenges because of their age. Before StopCancer was founded, the healthcare system in Israel recognized only two categories of patients: children and adults. Young adults fell between the cracks and did not receive recognition, support or an appropriate response to their unique needs. For instance, a young woman diagnosed with cancer who was not aware of fertility issues when faced with chemotherapy treatment, would often miss the prospect of becoming a mother. Additionally, because there is still a lack of knowledge and awareness of the distinctive characteristics of the disease in younger patients, they are diagnosed too late. Thus, adversely altering their survival rate, which in certain types of cancer is significantly lower than that of children and even of elderly patients. Another significant challenge is that young people with cancer experience tribulations that delay their return to work; while at the same time, employers are in no rush to hire them.

How we Work

The Halasartan community recognizes that it has an innate power and ability to forge a new restorative reality for itself. As the very people who have been there and experienced first-hand the deficiency, difficulty, and struggle, the members know how to create optimal solutions that are most relevant to them. In its very essence, the community acts as an equal-opportunities accelerator, empowering cancer patients and those in recovery to take matters into their own hands and fill the gaps that they themselves have identified through their own experiences.

The community has proven to create compelling change that has a far-reaching impact, this includes passing laws in the Knesset and spearheading projects that shorten bureaucratic processes in government institutions. In one particularly ground-breaking initiative, 24/7 digital monitoring of the discourse among community members revealed eight unique and unmet needs of young cancer patients. Based on those findings, a book was published which, for the first time, exposed the distinctive needs of our specific community to professionals in the field. The book's impact revolutionized Israel's nursing curriculum and furthermore, headed the creation of a new role within the healthcare system – a nurse specifically qualified to care for young people.

The "Back to Work" program initiated by the community, promotes professional rehabilitation and has been employed by the National Insurance Institute's rehabilitation basket, and plans for a survivors' clinic was implemented by "HaKaveret" - the social entrepreneurship hub established by JDC and Maccabi Health Services with the National Insurance Institute Funds. Alongside these initiatives, the community is creating an impact that resonates beyond the immediate community; for instance, the new legislation in the Israeli parliament relating to sick leave and the Green Wave project which reduces the obstacles that patients encounter in many government offices.

Since the formation of the community, Halasartan has initiated and established five oncological-integrative medical centres for young people in Israel's largest oncological institutes. Our centres provide thousands of cancer patients with treatment and allow ground-breaking research to be conducted, with the results published in prestigious global medical journals.

Today, the Ministry of Health officially recognizes 'Young People' as a distinct patient category, this is a revolution. An article published in *The Lancet Oncology*¹ referring to the activities of StopCancer, states: "Social media has become a key player in changing the rules of the game in medicine, and moreover, in the field of cancer... it is a paradigm shift."

We are very pleased that the Halasartan model we have created is being studied in Israel with the aim of further expansion and replication nationwide. In addition, there is a considerably growing interest from the international community, as more young patients are diagnosed with cancer every day.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about joining our mission to continue and expand our essential activities and forge a better tomorrow.