

**Dr. Nancy Moules & Dr. Andrew Estefan, *University of Calgary, Canada***

**Sexuality in Adolescents Living with Cancer:  
The Refractive Capacity of the Disease Lens**

**Email [estefan](mailto:estefan@ucalgary.ca)  
[njmoules@ucalgary.ca](mailto:njmoules@ucalgary.ca)**

For young people, the body represents both a profoundly private, yet public space. One task of adolescence is to develop a sense of “Who I am” in relation to “you”. The young person’s body is experienced subjectively, yet it is also an object that is crafted, displayed for, and acted upon by others. Identity, agency, social, and intimate relationships are therefore realized through the body. For young people living with cancer, the object and subject status of the body is refracted through a disease lens. A body that contains cancer therefore complicates rather than facilitates expressions of friendship, intimacy, and love. As well as participating in the expected developmental tasks of adolescence, young people with cancer are following another medicalized trajectory, shaped by a discourse that covers over and sometimes displaces other struggles with identity and sense of self. In this paper, we consider how young people with cancer are excluded from the language of sexuality.

*Nancy J. Moules, RN, PhD is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary. She is currently conducting a program of family, psychosocial, and relational research in pediatric oncology, funded through the Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta. Andrew Estefan, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary. His research focuses on how gender and sexuality intersect mental health.*