



advocacy
CHATS

The Psychosocial Impact of Cancer



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Today's Chat Agenda

- **Updates: Community Oncology Alliance (COA) and COA's Patient Advocacy Network (CPAN)**
 - Registration Open: CPAN Virtual Advocacy Summit – **Wednesday, September 28, 2022**
- **Overview of CancerCare**
- **Understanding the emotional impact of a cancer diagnosis**
 - Initial Diagnosis and Ongoing Challenges
- **Patient and Caregiver Resources and Assistance**

Learn more:

COA's Patient Advocacy Network: www.coaAdvocacy.org
Community Oncology Alliance: www.communityoncology.org
CancerCare: www.cancercares.org



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The Psychosocial Impact of Cancer on Families &
CancerCare Support Services

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Initial Thoughts and Emotions

- Those who have been diagnosed with cancer may feel many mixed emotions
 - Fear, shock, denial, confusion, sadness
- Common thoughts could include:
 - Am I going to die?
 - Why me?
 - How did I get cancer? Did I cause it?
 - Who will care for my loved ones?
- May be unsure of how to tell family, friends, employers and colleagues
- Uncertain of next steps
- Question financial security in paying for cancer related treatments



Ongoing Impact of a Cancer Diagnosis

- Change in physical appearance
- Change in demeanor and affect
- Change in movement and energy
- Experiencing symptoms of disease and side effects of treatment
- Insecurity and diminished self esteem



- Questioning ability of being able to fulfill job responsibilities
- Managing activities of daily living and adhering to treatment schedule and/or attending appointments
- Family and child care concerns
- Pressure of prior expectations
- Wanting to be “normal”
- Financial concerns

Families Affected by Cancer

- Stress of a cancer diagnosis impacts the family as a whole in various ways
- It is difficult to know how to navigate and adjust to changes that may occur
- The diagnosis can impact each family member differently, which could be dependent upon their role within the family unit
- A cancer diagnosis in the family can impact children's behavior, emotions and overall well being



Speaking to Children about Cancer

Approaching the first conversation with children can be daunting. However, it may be beneficial to discuss a cancer diagnosis as soon as possible. Before speaking about the diagnosis, parents may consider the following:

- What they would like to share
- When and where the conversation will take place
- Who will be present during this conversation
- Setting the tone
- Asking professionals for guidance



It is important to explain a cancer diagnosis in terms that children can best understand

- Using words that are common and familiar
 - Focusing on providing accurate information and being honest
 - Although challenging, utilizing the term “cancer”
 - Everything does not need to be shared in one conversation
- Considering simple and concrete terms such as:

“Mom is sick with an illness called cancer. The cancer happened on its own – nobody did anything to make it happen. My doctors are doing the best they can to take care of me, and I am going to do everything possible to get better”

When diagnosed, it will be unknown how long families will be managing cancer related concerns

- Even when treatment concludes, there are many adjustments that continue to occur – the impact does not conclude when treatment does
- Openly communicate about the impact cancer continues to have on family members throughout this experience
- Being honest, even if the news is not always good, making sure children hear good or bad news directly from parents if possible – the source is very important



A cancer diagnosis is overwhelming. Additional support for families can be helpful as they face new challenges together.

- Support services are available to those impacted by cancer, including children
- Encouraging children to express current feelings and concerns
- Being mindful of any emotional changes in children that might indicate they are stressed from worry
- Discussing outlets children can utilize when feeling upset or overwhelmed
- Allowing space for children to feel heard
- Modeling and explaining aspects of self-care
- Continuing to instill one's foundation as a family and approach challenges as a team



CancerCare Services



Individual Counseling
Speak to an Oncology
Social Worker



Support Groups
Face-to-Face, Online
and Telephone



**Connect Education
Workshops**
Telephone and Online



Case Management
Practical Guidance,
Information and Resources



Publications
Cancer-Related Topics
Online or In-print



**Financial and
Co-Payment
Assistance**
Help and Resources



Community Programs
Free Programs Held
in NY, NJ and CT



**Cancer Out Loud!
The CancerCare Podcast**
Launched in
March 2020



Coping Circles
National workshops for
people with cancer and
their caregivers



**To speak with an oncology social worker, call our toll-free HOPEline:
800-813-HOPE (4673)**

**You can also visit us online to learn more about CancerCare's programs and
services: www.cancercare.org**



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**Thank You to Lauren Chatalian & Our
Listeners!**

**Don't miss our Virtual Community Oncology
Advocacy Summit – Wednesday, September 28,
2022**



Register Today
www.coaAdvocacy.org