Online Communities for Support [1]

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For many people with cancer, connecting with others provides emotional support and inspiration during this challenging time. Whether it's joining a support group [3] or finding a support buddy [4], there are several options to try to get the help you need. Joining an online community makes it easier to connect with others, even if they live far away.

About online communities

Online communities let you create a personal profile where you share information about yourself for others to view. You choose whom to invite or allow access to your profile. The purpose is to make it easier to stay in touch with family and friends and to connect with others in a similar life situation. They can also help people with cancer who live far from a support group that meets in person, and give people who don't like face-to-face groups another option to connect with others.

In an online community, you can post a picture or video of yourself and share updates with people in your network whenever you choose. You are free to decide how much information you are comfortable sharing with others. Several sites offer privacy settings and tools, which let you control who can view your profile and what they can see or read. When creating a profile, learn about the privacy settings and options the site offers to understand how your information is used and how it can be accessed, so you will feel more comfortable when sharing your profile.

Sharing stories with other people in an online community may help you learn about treatment options and other concerns, such as side effects. While sharing these experiences is helpful, keep in mind that only your doctor can give you the best advice for your type of cancer and situation, and that your experience with side effects may be different from others.

If you have thought about joining an online community, here are a few options.

4th Angel Mentoring Program [5] provides free, one-on-one, confidential telephone support for people with cancer and their caregivers. Trained mentors who are cancer survivors or have been a caregiver to a person with cancer offer support and guidance during a difficult time.

Inspire [6] features groups for people with cancer and their caregivers. You can also join groups for other health conditions besides cancer. Once you join a group, you can post questions and comments on discussion boards and connect with other group members. Help other members and give encouragement by responding to

their stories and questions. Several patient advocate organizations feature support communities on Inspire.

MyLifeLine.org [7] provides free websites for people with cancer and caregivers to keep family and friends updated. Sharing a web page helps reduce the number of times you have to repeat similar conversations to people concerned about you. A calendar on the site helps you keep track of doctor and treatment visits and other important appointments. Plus, you can post requests for help, such as rides to appointments, babysitting, or donations.

Lotsa Helping Hands [8] helps you coordinate caregiving tasks among family members and friends. Simply fill in requests for help on a group calendar for visitors to sign up to help. For example, post the dates and times that a ride is needed to and from treatment or mark a time when help is needed with grocery shopping. Use message boards to stay up to date and try their mobile application [9] that helps you connect. They also provide support to members and coordinators of the My Cancer Circle [10] communities.

Cancer Support Community [11] is an international non-profit dedicated to providing support, education, and hope to people affected by cancer. They provide support services through a network of professionally-led community-based centers, hospitals, community oncology practices, and online.

CaringBridge [12] helps you create a free, private, and secure web page, communicate updates in a patient care journal, share pictures, and invite visitors to write messages in a guestbook. Visitors can also learn about the disease or condition that their friend or family member is coping with.

CarePages [13] lets you publish a free web page to post updates and messages to family and friends, share photos, receive encouraging messages, and connect with others coping with a similar situation. Several discussion forums and blogs offer help for patients on several topics, such as living with cancer and taking care of your emotional health.

Friend for Life Cancer Support Network [14] is a network of cancer survivors and caregivers who provide compassionate, one-on-one support to others diagnosed with cancer and to their loved ones.

Know Cancer [15] is dedicated to connecting, educating, and empowering all people affected by the many forms of cancer. It offers an online community that provides social and professional support to patients and their loved ones.

Navigating Cancer [16] is a free website specifically for cancer patients and their supporters, offering tools and cancer resources that empower patients to take control of their health and partner more closely with their physicians, support network and other like patients.

Peer Support Network [17] provides online support for people newly diagnosed with cancer, cancer survivors, and caregivers. They offer a free, global network that connects people impacted by cancer with others that have gone through similar experiences and is available to anyone looking for or offering support.

More online options

Many patient advocate organizations offer online support services, such as discussion forums and chat rooms. Look for disease-specific patient advocacy organizations for information on what resources or online support services they offer.

More Information

Finding Support and Information [18]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/finding-support-and-information/online-communities-support
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/25383
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/24526
[5] http://www.4thangel.org/
[6] http://www.inspire.com/
[7] http://www.mylifeline.org/
[8] http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com/
[9] https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/lotsa-helping-hands/id606923858?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4
[10] http://mycancercircle.lotsahelpinghands.com/caregiving/home/
[11] http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org/
[12] http://www.caringbridge.org/
[13] http://www.carepages.com/
[14] http://www.friend4life.org/
[15] http://www.knowcancer.com/
[16] http://www.navigatingcancer.com/
[17] http://www.peersupportnetwork.org/
[18] http://www.cancer.net/node/30666