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## **Primary Care Doctors and Medical Oncologists Have Different Concerns About Providing Survivorship Care** [1]

*ASCO Annual Meeting  
June 5, 2011*

A survey of both primary care doctors and medical oncologists (doctors who treat cancer using medications) about the barriers to providing survivorship care showed that primary care doctors and medical oncologists have different concerns about caring for survivors.

More than 2,000 primary care doctors and medical oncologists who care for breast and colon cancer survivors completed this survey. Researchers found that medical oncologists were more likely to be concerned that patients might get duplicate care (the same tests or treatments from different doctors) and about which doctor should provide general preventive care. Primary care doctors were more concerned about having appropriate training to provide sufficient follow-up care, such as testing to find out if the cancer came back or treating long-term side effects. They were also more likely than oncologists to recommend additional tests or treatments out of concerns of malpractice.

According to lead author Katherine Virgo, PhD, MBA, Managing Director of Health Services Research at the American Cancer Society in Atlanta, a variety of medical, financial, or geographic barriers can be a challenge for doctors who provide care for cancer survivors. Patients may receive care from several different doctors, sometimes in different locations, over their lifetime.

### **What this means for patients**

“Cancer survivorship care is becoming particularly important today, as more and more patients are living longer and experiencing late effects, both physical and psychosocial,” said Dr. Virgo. “For patients transitioning back to the primary care doctor for their care, it’s essential to have a treatment summary and survivorship care plan to ensure continuity and coordination of care.” It’s important for patients to talk with both their oncologist and primary care doctor and make sure that information about their treatment and follow-up care recommendations is being shared.

## What to ask your doctor

- What type of follow-up tests will I need after cancer treatment is complete?
- Who will be providing such care?
- Can you provide a summary of the treatment I received and recommendations for follow-up care?

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