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Health Provider Coordination from Cancer Screening Through Survivorship Helps Improve Patient Care [1]

Quality Care Symposium
October 29, 2013

A review of the research from the past 30 years on coordinating cancer care found that various methods of coordination reduce hospitalizations and emergency department visits and increase patients? quality of life and overall satisfaction with their care.

As part of this review, researchers found that the most common efforts to coordinate cancer care were through a patient navigator, who is a person who helps guide patients, survivors, families, and caregivers through the health care system; home ?telehealth?, which is an automated telephone survey of patient symptoms followed by nurse review of responses; nurse case managers or care coordinators; and palliative care programs.

Researchers found that these efforts to coordinate care improved the cancer care patients received. For example, care coordination led to increases in breast cancer screening, higher patient satisfaction with care when diagnosed, better emotional health during treatment, increased use of hospice care at the end of life, and fewer hospitalizations.

What this means for patients

?Many patients with cancer receive poorly coordinated or fragmented care, which drives up costs and can lead to medical errors and ineffective symptom control,? said lead study author Sherri Sheinfeld Gorin, PhD, Senior Scientific Consultant for the National Cancer Institute and Leidos Biomedical Research, Inc. and the Director of New York Physicians against Cancer. ?There needs to be more attention and resources paid to educating and engaging providers in coordinating cancer care and empowering patients for self-management, including discussing survivorship planning with *both* their oncologist and their primary care providers.?

The process of diagnosing and treating cancer is complex and often involves a team of doctors, nurses, and other health care team members. In addition, you may still be seeing your primary care doctor for health issues unrelated to the cancer during your treatment, and you may be

visiting this doctor for your follow-up care after treatment ends. It is important that all the doctors you visit know about your cancer diagnosis and the treatments you are receiving.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What type and stage of cancer do I have? What does this mean?
- What are my treatment options?
- How will cancer treatment affect other health conditions I may have?
- Who will be coordinating my care?
- What information should I be ready to give to other health professionals who are caring for me?
- Can I get a written summary of my cancer treatment and a survivorship care plan for my records?
- Who will be providing my follow-up care after treatment ends?

For More Information

The Oncology Team [2]

Self-Advocacy: Participating in Your Cancer Care [3]

ASCO Cancer Treatment Summaries [4]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/research-and-advocacy/research-summaries/health-provider-coordination-cancer-screening-through-survivorship-helps-improve-patient-care
[2] http://dev-cancernet.asco.org/node/24957
[3] http://dev-cancernet.asco.org/node/24669
[4] http://dev-cancernet.asco.org/node/25394