Effective Patient-Provider Communication

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Disclosures

• None
Outline

• What is effective communication and why is it important?
• Communication strategies in oncology and immunotherapy
• Tools for effective communication
"FOR ALL THE SOPHISTICATED DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS OF MODERN MEDICINE, THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN (HEALTHCARE PROVIDER) AND PATIENT REMAINS THE PRIMARY DIAGNOSTIC TOOL."

Adapted from Danielle Ofri “What patients say, what doctors hear”
Why is effective communication important?

• Good communication can have important effects on the physical health of a patient

• Empirical research has identified better health, lower service use, and lower expenditures among more satisfied cancer survivors
  • Interventions to improve provider communication could lead to a more efficient use of healthcare resources (Rai et al., 2018, JNCCN)

• Communication in oncology care can have challenges
What is effective communication?

NCI Monograph – 2007
Framework for patient-centered communication in cancer care

• Fostering healthy relationships
• Exchanging information
• Responding to emotions
• Managing uncertainty
• Making decisions
• Enabling patient self-management


www.ons.org
What is effective communication?

Core Communication Skills (ASCO Consensus Guideline)

- review history, establish goals for the conversation, and anticipate the needs and responses of the patient and family
- explore understanding of their disease and collaboratively set an agenda after inquiring what the patient and family wish to address and explaining what the clinician wishes to address
- engage in behaviors that actively foster trust, confidence, and collaboration
- provide information that is timely and oriented to the patient’s concerns and preferences for information, check for understanding and document important discussions
- respond empathically when patients display emotion through verbal or nonverbal behavior
Communication strategies for patients on immunotherapy

Much is the same as with any cancer treatment but there are a few key aspects to consider:

• Patients and providers have different impressions of what is important to discuss
• Perceptions about the effectiveness of immunotherapy should be discussed
  • The most frequently chosen word patients used to describe immunotherapy treatment was ‘hopeful’
• Half of patients in this study thought a discussion of treatment options would be useful
• Discussion of the differences between immunotherapy and traditional chemotherapy is important

Gillespy, K et al., ASCO poster 2017

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Communication strategies for patients on immunotherapy

General patient education

- What is immunotherapy and how it works
- Response rates
- Toxicities
- Enforce and reinforce the need to call oncology team for any changes in health status
Communication strategies for patients on immunotherapy

Challenges

• Nomenclature
  – We still intermingle ‘chemotherapy’ with ‘immunotherapy’ which can lead to confusion among patients

• Patients need someone who will bridge communication between and among health care professionals and consulting services

• Many patients receive traditional treatments in addition to chemotherapy
Tools for effective communication

- Phone!
- Web charts and patient portals
- ONS IO patient education tool
- National guidelines
- Training programs
- ONS IO wallet card
The ONS Immunotherapy Wallet Card

IMMUNOTHERAPY WALLET CARD

NAME: ____________________________
CANCER DX: _______________________
I-O AGENTS RCV'D: ☐ CHECKPOINT INHIBITOR(S)
☐ CAR-T ☐ VACCINES ☐ ONCOlytic VIRAL THERAPY
☐ MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES
DRUG NAME(S): _____________________
IMMUNOTHERAPY TX START DATE: _____________
OTHER CANCER MEDICATIONS: _______________

NOTE: IMMUNOTHERAPY AGENTS ARE NOT CHEMOTHERAPY AND SIDE EFFECTS MUST BE MANAGED DIFFERENTLY. (SEE BACK)

IMMUNOTHERAPY CARD

IMMUNE-RELATED SIDE EFFECTS*, COMMON WITH CHECKPOINT INHIBITORS VARY IN SEVERITY AND MAY REQUIRE REFERRAL AND STEROIDS. PATIENTS HAVE A LIFETIME RISK OF IMMUNE-RELATED SIDE EFFECTS.

* May present as rash, diarrhea, abdominal pain, cough, fatigue, headaches, vision changes, etc. – confer with oncology team before changing I-O regimen or starting side effect treatment.

ONCOLOGY PROVIDER NAME _____________________
ONCOLOGY PROVIDER NO. _____________________
EMERGENCY CONTACT _________________________
CONTACT PHONE NO. _________________________

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Resources for effective communication

- Cancer Support Community Open to Options Program
  - https://www.cancersupportcommunity.org/patient-doctor-communication-research

- NCI Physicians Data Query (PDQ)

- Institute for Healthcare Improvement
Closing thoughts

• Immunotherapy has revolutionized cancer care and we are still learning how best to educate patients and families so that they are prepared for treatment, adverse events and survivorship

• Communication among health care providers is crucial

• Resources are available to help build communication skills and strategies

• Communication is a skill that we can all work to develop and improve
“THE SIMPLE THINGS A (HEALTHCARE PROVIDER) SAYS AND DOES TO CONNECT WITH PATIENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN HEALTH OUTCOMES”

Adapted from Lauren Howe and Kari Leibowitz
Stanford University
Questions or comments?

- I have some questions for you!
- What are the most challenging questions you have received from patients about their immunotherapy treatment?
- How do you balance hope/expectations for patients starting immunotherapy?
- What tools or resources do you use to improve your communication skills?

- Thank you!
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