

Supportive Care Treatment in Cancer Patients



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An important part of cancer medicine is supportive care, which refers to the medical care and services that are provided to cancer patients to help them cope with the side effects of cancer treatment and the disease itself. It can help manage the physical, psychological and social effects of cancer, alongside improving the quality of life for both cancer patients and their caregivers. Other benefits of supportive care include 1) reducing stress and anxiety; 2) providing emotional support; 3) helping patients cope with their diagnosis; 4) improving communication between patients and their healthcare team; 5) increasing survival rates; 6) allowing patients to receive treatment in their own homes; 7) helping patients return to their normal lives after treatment.

Cancer is a serious disease that can have a profound impact on patients and their families. While there are many different types of cancer, they all share one commonality: the need for supportive care. Supportive care is a critical but often under-appreciated aspect of cancer treatment that encompasses the ways in which we support patients during their illness, from

providing pain relief to offering emotional support. It is essential to the well-being of our patients, and yet it can be challenging to provide. One of the biggest challenges we face is the fact that each patient's needs are unique and a tailored individualized care plan is therefore warranted for our patients. In Switzerland, most institutions work in networks and cancer care is organized in multi-professional teams. Data clearly suggest that both palliative and supportive care improve clinical outcomes in several cancer subtypes, especially when treatment is early initiated. In several institutions in Switzerland, a screening that includes the wish of the patient helps to identify the need for early palliative care and supportive care.

What works for one person may not work for another, and what helps someone at one stage of their illness may not be beneficial in the later phase. This means that we have to constantly adapt our approach, although it can be difficult to keep up with the latest research and developments. Another challenge is the financial cost of supportive care. Many of the treatments we

use are expensive and often not covered by insurance, which can put a strain on both patients and their families. Finally, there is the emotional toll that caring for a sick loved one can take. It can be difficult to see someone you care about suffer, and even more so when there is little you can do to ease their pain or extend their life. Caring for a cancer patient can be rewarding, but it is also demanding and exhausting. Despite these challenges, supporting our patients through their cancer journey is essential. It is why we do what we do, and we will continue to strive to provide the best possible care for everyone who comes through our doors.

Many different types of supportive care are available, and the type that is suitable for a particular patient will depend on their individual needs. Some types of supportive care include counseling and support groups, psychological, social and nutritional support, as well as pain fatigue and sleep management. Furthermore, the management of treatment-related side effects, including immune-related early and late side effects, is

an important topic in supportive care. The value of supportive care cannot be underestimated; supportive care can make a huge difference in the lives of cancer patients.

Research in this field should be ongoing and clinical randomized controlled trials are key, as this approach will help to individualize cancer treatment and improve outcomes. Current recommendations in the Germany, Austria and Switzerland (DACH) region include S3-guidelines,¹ helping clinicians to optimize cancer treatment for the patients and their families.

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¹ S3-Leitlinie Supportive Therapie bei onkologischen PatientInnen. Leitlinienprogramm Onkologie. [Accessed February 2023]. Available from: <https://www.leitlinienprogramm-onkologie.de/leitlinien/supportive-therapie/>.