

Get Connected: The Importance of Psychosocial Care in Cancer Recovery

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer are traumatic events for cancer patients and their loved ones. Many emotional and practical challenges arise from a cancer diagnosis. These challenges are often called the *psychosocial needs* of cancer patients and can include the need for emotional support, financial support, physical care, and practical help, such as transportation to medical appointments or assistance with finding information about a particular type of cancer.

The Institute of Medicine's (IOM) November 2007 report, *Cancer Care for the Whole Patient: Meeting Psychosocial Health Needs*, states that psychosocial care "...addresses the emotional challenges that can accompany a serious illness as well as the life challenges that can prevent good health care and patients' ability to take care of themselves: inability to pay for and receive health care or medications; a lack of transportation to medical appointments; inability to perform personal care activities such as bathing or preparing meals; and lack of information, knowledge, and skills addressing how to monitor and improve their health." The report confirmed the importance

of concentrating on psychosocial needs and found that failure by a healthcare provider to address these needs of cancer patients and their caregivers "is a failure to effectively treat [the] patients' cancer, plain and simple."

Psychosocial care is important because it can have a profound effect on a patient's quality of life and may improve the possibility of recovery. Support groups can help people affected by cancer to become more active in decision-making during their treatment, managing their side effects, and talking with their doctor. This approach helps decrease depression and increase work-related productivity, as people living with cancer are better able to focus and function as a result of their active engagement in their own treatment and survival.

In addition, participating in nutrition and exercise programs and stress-reduction classes can empower people affected by cancer to learn vital skills that enable them to regain control, reduce isolation, and restore hope—regardless of the stage of their disease.

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cancer support, education and hope

Organizations like The Wellness Community are well positioned to address the psychosocial needs of cancer patients wherever they are along the cancer continuum—from the newly diagnosed, to those in treatment, to those who are five years into survival

About The Wellness Community

Founded in 1982 by Harold Benjamin, PhD, The Wellness Community (TWC) is the largest community-based psychosocial support program in the United States for people with cancer and their loved ones. At the center of The Wellness Community's program philosophy is Dr. Benjamin's Patient Active Concept™, which states that the more a patient actively engages in his or her own treatment and fights for recovery in partnership with his or her healthcare team, the more likely there will be an improvement in quality of life and a better possibility of recovery. The Wellness Community uses this organizing principle—The Patient Active Concept™ (the result of peer-reviewed and evidence-based research)—as the foundation of its free programs and services.

The Wellness Community Services and Programs

At over 100 locations worldwide, The Wellness Community provides support, education, and hope for people affected by cancer. These resources include 24 U.S.-based and two international centers with 73 satellite and off-site programs, and online at www.thewellnesscommunity.org. For additional information about being Patient Active™ in your cancer journey, or to find a Wellness Community support group near you, please visit The Virtual Wellness Community at www.thewellnesscommunity.org or call 888-793-WELL. In an effort to minimize common barriers to care, such as geography, cancer support and educational services are also available via the Internet at The Virtual Wellness Community, which offers online support groups and Web-friendly educational materials, including podcasts and Webcasts.

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