

Be Well Advised . . . About Cancer

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by either the runaway growth of cells or the failure of cells to die normally. Cancer cells also spread to other parts of the body. One of every two American men and one of every three American women at some point in their lives will experience cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 1.7 million new cases of cancer are diagnosed annually in the United States, a figure that does not include the 900,000+ cases of skin cancer. Cancer is the second leading cause of death (after heart disease) in the United States, accounting for over 600,000 deaths every year. It is responsible for nearly one of every four deaths in the United States.

There are more than 100 different varieties of cancer, which can be divided into six major categories. Carcinomas, the most common type of cancer, originate in tissues that cover a surface or line a cavity of the body. Sarcomas or cancer in the tissues that connect, support or surround other tissues and organs. Lymphomas are cancers of the lymph system and Leukemias are cancers of the blood-forming tissues and blood cells. As their name indicates, brain tumors are cancers that begin in the brain, and skin cancers, including dangerous melanomas, originate in the skin. Cancers are considered metastatic if they spread via the blood or lymphatic system to other parts of the body to form secondary tumors.

Genetics have taken a huge leap forward in the diagnosis and treatment of cancers. Many cancers develop genetic mutations for which targeted therapies are now available and extending the lives of cancer patients. There is new hope on the horizon as scientists and researchers discover the hidden intricacies of cancer and find new ways to conquer this horrible disease. Neuroscience is also proving what many care providers have long known, that the connection between our mind and our body's response to disease is very strong and can be nurtured and used as part of our arsenal of healing.

Hearing the words "*you have CANCER*" changes your life forever. The diagnosis of cancer, particularly for women, effects the entire family because of the many roles women have in our society – wife, mother, daughter . . . and in the larger community as friend, co-worker and colleague. For both women AND men, professional support can be critical for survival and time is of the essence.

Researchers have found that intervention for the emotional/logical effects of a cancer diagnosis can make an important difference in survival rates. The team of Dr. Kirk Warren Brown (University of Rochester, New York) and colleagues looked at various indicators of emotional state and coping, including positive and negative mood, anxiety, stress, sense of control and depressive symptoms among 205 cancer patients over a 10-year period. All participants were newly diagnosed with cancer; half with breast cancer. The researchers found that symptoms of depression were the most consistent logical predictor of shortened survival. They suggest that referrals for intervention to relieve stress are appropriate and can aid in survival of cancer. This is especially true during the first year after diagnosis. (Source: *Psychosomatic Medicine*)

Dr. DeMasters can help cancer patients in ways they know they need and in so many other that they may never have thought about – including:

- What to do immediately after receiving a diagnosis of cancer
- How to learn about your condition and manage your options - quickly
- How to tell family and friends, especially your children
- How to handle work – and maintain insurance coverage
- *Stress management – how to handle the stress that is so much a part of fighting cancer*
- *What are successful stress management strategies – There's no time to wade through ineffective, one-size-fits all approaches*
- Practical advice on how to handle the side effects and logistics of chemo or radiation therapies
- Nutritional strategies for cancer patients
- Learning all you need to know about your cancer and its treatment & how to be a survivor

Fighting cancer takes a team – Dr. DeMasters can be an integral part yours.