

# Education and Health Promotion for New Patients With Cancer: A Quality Improvement Model

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High levels of anxiety negatively affect how education is received by newly diagnosed patients with cancer by decreasing comprehension, retention, and patient satisfaction. Research has repeatedly shown that, after a careful assessment of individual needs, effective patient education delivered during the initial phase of diagnosis and treatment can improve symptoms of anxiety and fear, improve self-care decisions, decrease side effects of treatment, and enhance quality of life. The educational intervention presented in this article aims to improve the current system of providing education for newly diagnosed patients with cancer by assessing each patient and presenting an individualized information program in a controlled environment prior to chemotherapy.

**M**ore than 1.5 million people in the United States were diagnosed with cancer in 2010 (American Cancer Society, 2010). No other disease state evokes such a life-threatening reaction to immediately hinder quality of life. Receiving effective information regarding diagnosis and treatment during this stressful time period is very beneficial in reducing anxiety, regaining a sense of control, and creating realistic expectations (Hinds, Streater, & Mood, 1995; Ream & Richardson, 1996; Wells, McQuellon, Hinke, & Cruz, 1995). Appropriate educational interventions also have been noted to support patients in coping with a newly diagnosed cancer (Mueller & Glennon, 2007). Oncology nurses frequently shoulder the responsibility of educating patients about their disease and the recommended therapy, potential side effects, and other vital information (Brant & Wickman, 2004; Luker et al., 1995). Oncology nurses also should be aware of the importance of providing timely, individualized instruction to patients newly diagnosed with cancer after assessing each patient's needs and preferences (McPherson, Higinson, & Hearn, 2001; Stephens, Osowski, Fidale, & Spagnoli, 2008). Consequently, an educational presentation tailored to each individual and delivered prior to chemotherapy may help ensure better patient satisfaction and positive outcomes.

The purpose of this quality improvement project was to enhance the current system of providing information to patients

## At a Glance

- ◆ Before planning an education presentation for newly diagnosed patients with cancer, an assessment of needs should be completed.
- ◆ Literacy level, reading skills, personal preference for learning, cultural or religious aspects, pain level, and amount of anxiety should be determined by the oncology nurse using an effective assessment tool.
- ◆ Patient satisfaction and quality of life during the initial phase of cancer treatment are increased when effective education is presented prior to chemotherapy treatment.

newly diagnosed with cancer and their families. The delivery of individualized content prior to chemotherapy was evaluated in a controlled learning environment to accomplish this task.

## Background

At an outpatient oncology clinic in northern Alabama, the protocol for patients newly diagnosed with cancer was to give all information concerning treatment and side effects on the first day of chemotherapy without any assessment of individual needs or

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