



Patient Appreciation Day in Radiation Oncology

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Patients undergoing radiation therapy struggle with many physical and emotional stressors. Many ways to help patients cope with stressors and improve the treatment experience are found in the literature, including humor, art, entertainment, and hospitality. At H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center, the radiation therapy nurses and staff members use entertainment in an annual patient appreciation day event as one way to give back to the patients.

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Many changes have occurred in health care over the years that attempt to improve the experiences of patients struggling with illness. Humor, art, entertainment, hospitality, and complementary medicine are all strategies to improve the way patients cope with their disease and treatment (Ziqi, Robson, & Hollis, 2013). Healthcare team members may use many of these strategies to show appreciation for what patients are going through. By using these strategies, patients can be distracted from their challenges and experience less anxiety (Trevisani et al., 2010). One of the goals in the radiation department at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, FL, is to assist the patient with having more enjoyment during his or her time of stress.

Oncology healthcare team members often receive recognition from patients and their caregivers to let them know how much they appreciate the care received. At H. Lee Moffitt, nurses and the multidisciplinary team host an annual patient appreciation day on October 31 to improve patients' experience in radiation oncology. To show appreciation for the

patients in the radiation oncology department, the staff work together to transform the department into a fantasy land, using lighthearted themes, costumes, props, decorations, and treats.

The patients and staff enjoy this event, as evidenced by the smiles and laughter throughout the department. Studies

show that patients appreciate and use humor as a way to help with stressful situations (Christie & Moore, 2005). Patients also report satisfaction with entertainment being incorporated into the healthcare experience (Ziqi et al., 2013). Entertainment is a big part of the patient appreciation day.

The theme of the most recent event was Radiation Cinemas. The radiation therapy areas in the facility are divided into several zones based on the type of treatment machine. As patients came for treatment, they found the area had been transformed with movie-related themes. For example, the check-in staff dressed in white shirts, red vests, and bow ties and remade their zone into the theater box office. Other staff members followed suit and transformed treatment areas into movie sets. Patients were given movie tickets and popcorn bags loaded with treats. Each zone represented different movies themes, such as *101 Dalmatians*, *A League of Their Own*,



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