

There are more than 4 million Americans who care for someone with cancer at home. Family caregivers provide more than half of the care needed by patients, but are not always prepared for that role (Northouse, L., Williams, A, Given, B. & McCorkle, R, 2012).

Two of caregivers' most important needs are to obtain information and learn skills that will enable them to provide high quality physical and emotional care to the person with cancer. Providing care to cancer patients is complex and can be technical. Hints to provide effective skills training include:

- Make a list of the types of care that the caregiver will provide. Check off the items when the caregiver demonstrates an understanding of the skill and ability to perform it. Ongoing training and reinforcement can be done during several patient visits.
- Provide direct demonstration of technical skills and have the caregiver provide a return demonstration of it.
- For key information, ask the patient or caregiver to repeat back what they heard or saw demonstrated so their understanding can be assessed. Clarify or correct any misunderstandings, as needed.
- Provide an opportunity and a calm atmosphere that enables them to ask questions.
- Consider a follow up phone call or home care referral to assess their ability and confidence to provide care at home. (Performing a skill under the direct supervision of the nurse in a health care setting is very different than doing it on your own at home, especially for the first time).
- Provide contact information to the patient and/or caregiver so they can ask questions or learn about resources if needed in the future.
- Consider providing caregivers with written directions or videos to use at home. This will help to reinforce the information they were given.
- If possible, develop educational and instructional manuals that provides the guideline or steps for various procedures that caregivers need to learn. Make the manual available to staff to help reduce confusion and variability in how staff provide caregiver skill training.

For additional information view our Oncology Nurse Skills Training video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR6zUv1hPEc&feature=youtu.be&list=PLgND6mUAyF4FSkBuRNUK3LLETajzXWmOd>

and for more specific information about this evidence view Caregiver Strain and Burden in the ONS PEP resources at:

<https://www.ons.org/practice-resources/pep/caregiver-strain-and-burden>.

Northouse, L, Williams, A, Given, B & McCorkle(2012). *Psychosocial care for family caregivers of patients with cancer. Journal of Clinical Oncology, 30*. DOI: 10.1200/JCO.2011.39.5798