UNDERSTANDING GENETIC VARIANTS
FACILITATOR GUIDE
THIS RESOURCE WAS DEVELOPED BY ONS THROUGH A SPONSORSHIP FROM ASTRAZENECA.

Overview
The patient education discussion tool Understanding Genetic Variants is a simplified overview of the types of variants that may be found when a patient undergoes biomarker testing. Nurses can use this to facilitate a conversation to help patients understand the results of their testing.

This facilitator guide is meant to provide a couple of models in which you may review the Understanding Genetic Variants discussion tool with a group of nurses. It includes an in-person model and a virtual model. Both methodologies involve reviewing the quick guide and discussing how it might affect conversations with patients or patient care.

Below, please find information that the facilitator needs to prepare for this session, setup considerations for in-person and virtual sessions, and important points to include while giving an overview of the discussion tool. Each group and setup can be different depending on your participants, location, and physical resources. The outline and options are not fixed but rather are suggestions for how you might be able to adapt the session for your group and environment; review this guide and take the particulars of your group or situation into account during planning.

Facilitator Preparation

Institutional Application
Whether conducting these sessions in person or virtually, send a copy of the Understanding Genetic Variants discussion tool to the nurses in advance of the session. Ask them to review the resource and come prepared for discussion and with any questions they might have.

If appropriate, consider conducting this session as a part of a larger session or meeting. For example, if all nurses are present for another educational session, this content may work well as a five-minute segment of that meeting.

Session

Setup: In Person
Length of session: five minutes
Ensure that all nurses can see the Understanding Genetic Variants discussion tool; they could each have a copy or view it on a screen.

Setup: Virtual

Length of session: five minutes

Consider conducting this as a smaller segment of a larger meeting; a five-minute virtual meeting may not be worth the time and effort to set up.

Share your screen to ensure that all nurses can see the Understanding Genetic Variants discussion tool and are following along with the section you are discussing.

Overview

First, take about two minutes to give an overview of the Understanding Genetic Variants discussion tool. As long as the nurses receive the tool in advance, they should be familiar with the setup and flow. Be sure to touch on the following:

- **Purpose:** To help nurses facilitate a conversation with patients so that they may understand the types of results they might receive after undergoing biomarker testing.
- **When to use:** This information is useful to have when you have a patient who will be undergoing, or has undergone, biomarker testing. Understanding the information will help the patient better understand the basic types of variants, as well as their classifications.
- **Format:**
  - The Understanding Genetic Variants discussion tool is set up to start on the top with a simplified explanation of the types of variants: inherited (germline) or acquired (somatic).
  - The right side of the tool provides recipe analogies that will be relatable, which will help patients understand the classifications of the test findings.
  - Benign: The change in the recipe did not affect the taste and consistency of the cake; it is a harmless change.
    - These findings will usually not be noted on the biomarker testing report.
  - Variant of uncertain significance: The change in the recipe resulted in mixed reviews from family members; the change has unknown significance.
    - Although some variants have uncertain significance, research is ongoing and the variants will be reclassified when more data become available (moving them to benign or pathogenic).
    - Treatment decisions are not based on these findings but are based on the patient and family medical history.
    - Because of ongoing research, multiple biomarker germline tests at different points in a patient’s life may be recommended. They should consult with a genetic professional to determine if retesting could be of benefit to them.
  - Pathogenic: The change in the recipe resulted in poor taste and consistency; it is a harmful change.
These are actionable findings. Cancer screening and treatment decisions will be made based on these findings, as well as the patient and family medical history.

- The information in this discussion tool is simplified to make it digestible for the patient. The nurse may want to have a broader base of knowledge to be able to better inform the patient and answer questions. Refer your nurses to the ONS Genomics and Precision Oncology Learning Library. This library has tools such as the following:
  - Patient education resources
  - Clinical practice resources
  - Learning activities
  - Genomic “Glad You Asked” video series
  - Articles
  - Genomics taxonomy
  - Books
  - Podcasts

Discussion

In Person

Because the nurses were asked to review the discussion tool in advance and to consider their questions, they should be prepared with those questions for this short discussion.

Smaller group discussion: If you have a smaller meeting, it may be best to allow the nurses to ask their questions and to answer them as fully as possible with the information you gathered.

Larger group discussion: Because many individuals will likely have similar questions, you can have them chat for 30 seconds with the people around them (three to five people) to determine if they had the same questions. At that point, one person from each group can share the most common question from the group. After one question from each group is answered, you can ask if any questions remain.

Please note the following: Conducting a conversation with a larger group may take more time. If you cannot allot more time for this conversation, you may want to start an email thread or virtual asynchronous chat (e.g., Microsoft Teams chat) as a means of follow-up so that nurses can ask their questions and everyone can benefit from the answers.

Alternative option: If you have time, you could engage with your nurses on items from the ONS Genomics and Precision Oncology Learning Library, as well as the discussion tool. For example, you may review the discussion tool and then watch a video together that could fuel further education and discussion. Another example may be to review all the patient discussion tools on the site so that your nurses have several tools to facilitate different kinds of conversations.

Virtual

Because the nurses were asked to review the discussion tool in advance and to consider their questions, they should be prepared with those questions for this short discussion.
**Smaller group discussion:** If you have a smaller meeting, it may be best to allow the nurses to ask their questions and to answer them as fully as possible with the information you gathered. It is sometimes hard to know when to speak in a virtual meeting, so even in a smaller group, it may be beneficial to have nurses raise their hands (usually a button on the software) and call on individuals to voice their questions. Alternatively, you could have the nurses type their questions into the chat and you can answer the questions aloud.

**Larger group discussion:** As groups get larger, speaking virtually becomes increasingly difficult. For larger groups, it is often beneficial to have the participants type their questions into the chat and you can answer those questions verbally for all participants.

Because this is meant to be a short activity, it would likely not work to send the participants into breakout rooms to discuss the tool. However, if you have additional time and would like them to discuss further, smaller groups are better; you can send participants to breakout rooms to talk and determine if they have any remaining questions. After closing the breakout rooms, the whole group can reconvene to answer any remaining questions.

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