



Cancer Education Project

Coping With Cancer

Overview:

This activity is designed to develop students' understanding that the prognosis and the treatments for different types and stages of cancer may be different. It also develops students' "medical consumer" skills for posing questions and seeking more information. For this activity, each student (or pair of students) is randomly assigned a different type of cancer from the list below. Students assume the role of a patient who has been diagnosed with a specific kind of cancer. The activity requires approximately 120 minutes of class time.

Class 1: Learning About Cancer Prognosis and Treatment (40 minutes)

Do before the class:

- Copy and cut apart the Cancer Stage Cards below. You will need one card for each student.

Cancer Stage Cards (cut to separate and then distribute one card to each student)

Cancer Stage I	Cancer Stage II	Cancer Stage III	Cancer Stage IV
---------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------

- Create a folder for each student (or pair of students). Each folder should have the type of cancer written on the front and should contain:
 - One (or two) copies of handouts on Cancer Staging found at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Detection/staging> or http://www.cancer.org/docroot/ETO/content/ETO_1_2X_Staging.asp

- One (or two) copies of the following handout “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” (4 pages).
- One (or two) copies of information on one type of cancer—a different type of cancer for each student or pair of students. Use <http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancerinfo/wyntk> and <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/alphalist> as sources. Below is a list of suggested cancer types:

Adrenocortical Cancer	Bladder Cancer	Bone Cancer
Brain Tumor	Breast Cancer	Esophageal Cancer
Cervical Cancer	Colon Cancer	Liver Cancer
Laryngeal Cancer	Leukemia	Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
Lung Cancer	Hodgkin's Lymphoma	Ovarian Cancer
Multiple Myeloma	Oral Cancer	Retinoblastoma
Pancreatic Cancer	Prostate Cancer	Skin Cancer (melanoma)
Salivary Gland Cancer	Testicular Cancer	Skin Cancer (non-melanoma)
Small Intestine Cancer	Stomach (Gastric) Cancer	Wilm's Tumor
Thyroid Cancer	Uterine Cancer	

During Class:

- Explain that the American Cancer Society estimates that in 2007 approximately 1.44 million people will be diagnosed with cancer.
- Ask students to take a few minutes to write words or sentences to describe the feelings that they might have if they had just learned that they had cancer.
- Ask students to write words or sentences to describe the feelings that they might have if they were a doctor who had to tell a patient that he/she had cancer.
- Ask two students to read the following scenario of a discussion between a doctor and a patient (see next page). Distribute the Stage Cards and folders with different types of cancer information to students.

Doctor: Hello, how are you doing today?

Patient: Ok, I guess..... But that call from your office telling me that I should make an appointment to discuss the results of my biopsy made me really upset. Does that mean that I have cancer?

Doctor: Yes, the pathology report indicates that you do have cancer.

Patient: (Sigh), I'd hoped that I'd be calm about this and ask the right kinds of questions. But that news is tough to handle. The only question I can think of right now is "How bad is it?"

Doctor: The pathology report I received tells me what stage your cancer is in.

Pause while teacher randomly distributes Stage Cards to class members.

Patient: So, do I have this right? High numbers are really bad and low numbers are better? What does that number tell you about my chances of beating this cancer?

Doctor: That's right—a higher numbered stage is not good. But, I'm not a cancer expert. I want to be sure that you get accurate information from an oncologist, a cancer specialist, who will be better able to answer your question about your chances of beating this cancer. I'm going to refer you to an oncologist, a cancer specialist who will answer your questions and help you select the best treatment.

Patient: OK, I hope that the oncologist can see me soon! I can't take the stress of waiting to find out what all of this really means.

Doctor: We'll speed this up by making your appointment with the oncologist before you leave today. In the mean time, our physician's assistant has put together a folder of information for you. This includes some information on your cancer and on cancer staging. It might help to answer some of your questions.

Pause while teacher distributes folders to each student in the class.

Patient: I'm not sure I even want to know about this stuff. I guess I don't even know what kinds of questions I should ask the cancer specialist.

Doctor: That's a common reaction to discovering that you have cancer. To help cancer patients, the American Cancer Society has put together a list of questions that patients should ask their oncologist to answer. Your folder contains a copy of this list. There's also a place where you can write other questions as you learn more about your cancer.

Patient: OK, I guess I'll have to read this stuff before I see the cancer specialist.

Doctor: I've already talked to the oncologist. Be sure to make your appointment before you leave today. You'll also need to sign a form so that I can send a copy of your medical records to the oncologist.

- Explain the following concepts to the students:
 - Most people will face a diagnosis of cancer, for themselves or a loved one, during their lifetime. When they do, they will need to know how to cope with and how to fight cancer.
 - The purpose of this activity is to develop their “medical consumer” skills for gathering information about coping with and fighting one kind of cancer.
 - Waiting passively for the oncologist to provide information about the answers to the questions on this sheet may result in “information overload.”
 - To avoid “information overload”, they (as patients) should prepare for their visit with the oncologist by trying to learn as much about the answers to the questions as possible. That way they will be better prepared to understand what the oncologist is telling them and to ask additional important questions.
 - Ask students to look at the “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” sheet in their folder. They should read the two paragraphs at the top of this handout and read the questions.
- Ask students to use the information in the folder (and Internet research, if possible) to:
 - Answer the questions on the first page of the “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” sheets.
 - On the second page of the “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” sheets, write 5 other questions a cancer patient might ask the oncologist.
- Students should complete unfinished parts of the first two pages of the “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” sheets for homework.

Class 2: After Beginning Cancer Treatment (40 minutes)

- Explain that the cancer patient has begun cancer treatment and has been reading more about his/her cancer and cancer treatment. The patient has an appointment to meet with the physician’s assistant in the oncologist’s office.
- Ask students to read the introduction and the questions on the third page of the “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” sheets.
- Ask the class to brainstorm a list of additional questions they think the patient might have about his/her cancer treatment? Write these questions on the board.
- Ask each student to select 6 questions from the class list that they think are most important. They should write these on the fourth page of the “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” sheets.
- Explain that now students should prepare to play the role of a physician’s assistant in the oncologist’s office. They will need to do research to find the answers to the questions on the third and fourth pages of the “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” sheets. They should write out the answers to these questions so that they are prepared to meet with the patient during the next class.

- Explain that all four pages of the “Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer” sheets should be completed for the next class period.
- Explain that during the next class, they will need to play the role of a physician’s assistant who explains the answers to some questions to a cancer patient and a family member.

Class 3: Role Play (40 minutes)

- Distribute one copy of the “Instructions for Role Play” to each student.
- Assign students to work in teams of three. Students should identify which members of the team will play the role of the physician’s assistant, the patient, and the family member.
- Ask students to follow the instructions for the role play activity. They will have 10 minutes to do this.
- Allow 5 minutes for individual reflection at the end of class. Reflection question: “What are the three most important things that you learned about being a cancer patient?”
- Allow 5 minutes for students to share their answers to the reflection question with the class or in small groups.

Page 1

Questions to Ask My Doctor about My Cancer

These questions were developed by the American Cancer Society

Before Treatment

Being diagnosed with cancer can be overwhelming. Learning on your own about the disease, how it is treated, and how to apply this information to your situation is a daunting task. You may feel you need some help. Your doctor is the best source of information about your particular situation.

It is important to have frank, open discussions with your cancer care team. They want to answer all of your questions, no matter how trivial they might seem. But you need to know what to ask. Getting the answers to the questions below can help you understand your cancer and your options, so that you can be an active participant in your cancer treatment.

1. What kind of cancer do I have and where is it located?
2. Has my cancer spread beyond the primary site? How do you know whether it has or has not spread?
3. What is the stage of my cancer and what does that mean in my case?
4. What treatment choices do I have?
5. What do you recommend and why?

6. What risks or side effects are there to the treatments you suggest?

7. What are the chances my cancer will come back with these treatment plans? What is my prognosis with these treatments?

8. What should I do to be ready for treatment?

9. Should I follow a special diet?

10. Will the treatment be painful? Will I have any scars?

Page 2

Questions to Ask My Doctor about My Cancer

Before Treatment

In addition to the sample questions on the previous page, be sure to write down some of your own. For instance, you might want more information about recovery times so you can plan your work schedule. Or, you might want to ask about second opinions or clinical trials for which you may qualify. Write at least 5 of your own questions below.

Other Questions I Need Answered

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Page 3

Questions to Ask My Doctor about My Cancer

These questions were developed by the American Cancer Society

During or After Treatment

Once you have decided on a course of treatment, you will need to know what to expect and what to look out for. While all of the questions may not apply to you, asking the ones that do may be helpful.

1. How will you know if the treatment is working?
2. Is there anything more that I can do to manage the side effects?
3. Are there any symptoms that I should notify you about immediately?
4. Will I need to be on a special diet during and after treatment?
5. Are there any limitations to my activities or amount of exercise?
6. How often will I need follow-up exams?

7. How will I know if the cancer has returned? What symptoms should I watch for?

8. Will I have more imaging tests in the future such as CT scans or MRI scans?

9. What blood tests will be needed?

10. What are my options if the cancer comes back?

Page 4**Questions to Ask My Doctor about My Cancer****During or After Treatment**

In addition to the sample questions on the previous page, be sure to write down some of your own. For instance, you might be worried about how your illness is affecting your family members. Or, you want to know about some cancer research you read about on the Internet. Write at least 5 of your own questions below.

Other Questions I Need Answered

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Instructions for Role Play

Round 1 (10 minutes)

1. Identify who will play the role of the physician's assistant, the cancer patient, and the family member.
2. The physician's assistant should state the kind of cancer that he/she researched and hand his/her "Questions to Ask My Doctor About My Cancer" sheets to the cancer patient.
3. The cancer patient should select ONE IMPORTANT question from pages 2 or 4 to ask the physician's assistant.
4. The physician's assistant should answer the cancer patient's question without referring to the answer written on the sheet. The patient and the family member should listen carefully to the physician's assistant's answer.
5. The patient should ask one follow-up question about what the physician's assistant said.
6. The family member should ask one follow-up question about what the physician's assistant said.
7. Repeat steps 3 through 6 until your teacher indicates that the time for the role play has ended.

Round 2 (10 minutes)

Identify new team members to play the role of the physician's assistant, the cancer patient, and the family member. Repeat steps 2-7 of the role play instructions.

Round 3 (10 minutes)

Identify new team members to play the role of the physician's assistant, the cancer patient, and the family member. Repeat steps 2-7 of the role play instructions.

Individual Reflection (5 minutes)

Work individually to write an answer to this question. "What are the three most important things that you learned about being a cancer patient." Be prepared to share what you have written with your team members or your classmates.

Team Sharing of Reflections (5 minutes)

Team members should take turns sharing their answers to the reflection question with each other.