

Health Bulletin

Help Available For Cancer Distress

(NAPSA)—One of every two men and one of every three women in America will have cancer in their lifetime. Most patients experience emotional turmoil caused by the diagnosis, symptoms and treatment of cancer. This distress—a mix of anxiety and depressive symptoms—may cause sleeplessness, lack of appetite, trouble concentrating and difficulty carrying on regular activities. Although some distress is normal, about a third of cancer patients experience significant distress. Only about five percent of people with cancer obtain psychological help. While distress doesn't affect the cancer itself, it does affect how patients cope with their cancer and their ability to follow treatment recommendations.

Distress Treatment Guidelines for Patients is a free 32-page booklet that offers help for this neglected area of cancer care. This definitive and first-of-its-kind resource for cancer patients and their families and caregivers was written by the world's leading cancer authorities at the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) and the American Cancer Society.

Originally developed by the NCCN for cancer specialists, these treatment guidelines have now been translated by the American Cancer Society for the general public in English and Spanish versions. "They are designed to enhance a patient's quality of life, support patient-doctor communications and increase the success of cancer therapies by improving patients' ability to stick with their treatment plans," said Stephen Sener, M.D., national volunteer president of the American Cancer Society and vice chairman of the Department of Surgery at Evanston Northwestern Healthcare in Chicago.

Distress Coping Tips

- Deal with cancer "one day at a time."
- Find a doctor who lets you ask questions.
- Explore spiritual beliefs.
- Keep a personal notebook to track treatments, symptoms, side effects and emotions.
- Join a support group.



"Given the busy oncology offices today, there is often not enough time for doctors to ask about distress," said Jimmie Holland, M.D., world-renowned psychiatrist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, founder of the field of psycho-oncology and author of *The Human Side of Cancer*. Holland chaired the NCCN panel of 23 nationally recognized experts that developed these guidelines. "In my more than 25 years of practice, I have found that most cancer patients are reluctant to 'bother' the doctor and feel it would be a sign of weakness to mention their distress."

Distress Treatment Guidelines for Patients features The Distress Thermometer to help patients differentiate between the normal, expected distress that comes with the diagnosis and a more serious form of distress that requires help from an oncology professional; Do's and Don'ts for coping; Decision Tree Flow Charts to help patients understand symptoms, treatment and reevaluation; and a glossary of medical terms.

Distress Treatment Guidelines for Patients can be read or downloaded online or ordered at no cost on the Web at www.nccn.org or by calling toll-free 1-877-ACS-0133.