

Abstract PO-032: Patient-centered communication: Collaborative learning and communication strategies for patients and health care providers in the new normal of COVID-19

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Abstract

Background: Data from the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology & End Results (SEER) program estimate that in 2020 over 1.8 million new cancer diagnoses will occur. SEER data also indicate that over 15.5 million patients/survivors are currently living with a cancer diagnosis in the United States. Amid COVID-19, transitioning care beyond the clinic to minimize exposure for patients and health care providers is essential. Now more than ever, new and evolving ways to communicate openly and effectively are crucial for patients and their health care team.

Methods: In March-May, 2020, the Raymond Foundation hosted nationwide virtual focus groups and town halls for cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers to gain a better understanding of how COVID-19 is affecting their cancer care, communication with their health care team, and shared decision-making. Primary goals included reaching patients in rural, urban, and community oncology settings to gain perspective from diverse populations.

Results: 489 patients, survivors, and caregivers (54% female, 46% male) provided the following insights: 89% reported communication with their health care team had deteriorated since the pandemic; 94% indicated the need for increased communication with their health care team; 42% had a general knowledge of telehealth while 58% had little to no knowledge; 98% indicated they would like to learn more about telehealth options and would try this advanced class of service if offered by their health care team; 64% reported they were not able to accurately communicate treatment adverse effects leading to increased suffering; and 96% reported increased isolation and fear of the unknown care landscape.

Conclusion: Cancer patients realize the importance of patient-centered communication to facilitate a personalized dialogue to actively participate in their care. Empowering patients with the skills they require to comprehensively perceive telemedicine, virtual care, and remote monitoring will help minimize patient risk and provide an opportunity for patients to engage with their health care team throughout the care continuum. Implementing strategies to skillfully serve patients via telemedicine and teleconferencing may be the new normal as we virtually revive the classic house call.

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