OVARIAN CANCER AUSTRALIA WEBINAR

Communication and Cancer: Talking with your treatment team & loved ones
Ovarian Cancer Australia Webinar Presenters

Denise Firth was diagnosed with Breast Cancer in 1988 and Ovarian Cancer in 2004. She has had surgery, Radiotherapy and numerous Chemotherapy treatments. She is passionate about women sharing their experiences, supporting and informing each other. She happily gives insight into what has assisted her along her journey.

Dr Katharine Hodgkinson is a Clinical Psychologist with over 18 years’ experience in client care, research and education. She has a long standing interest in women’s cancer care and worked in a hospital based gynaecological oncology service for eight years.
Communication and Cancer:
Talking with your treatment team & loved ones
Dr Katharine Hodgkinson MAPS
Effective communication is tricky!
Communicating well with your team

- Essential for delivery of best practice care
- Most see as critical to good care & satisfaction
- Considerable evidence that communication skills are related to:
  - better patient outcomes
  - reduced risk of error, litigation & burnout
Why is it difficult for patients & loved ones?

- It’s an emotionally challenging time
- Information may be complex & life changing
- We all may “hear” different messages, have different time lines for adjustment & different information needs
- We don’t always click
“I don’t want to be a burden/worry them...”

“They are so busy - I’ve taken enough time...”

“It’s not their area/too embarrassing to raise it...”

“They’ll think I’m an anxious/neurotic patient...”

“They have more important people to see...”

“I haven’t been heard in the past...”

“They only deal with the surgery etc... they won’t be interested/able to help...”

“They might think I’m complaining/stupid...”
Plan your appointment
Getting the most out of your appointment
Communication and assertiveness skills
Manage your stress
Second opinions
Other resources

Breast Cancer Risk: Should I BRCA Gene Test?

You may want to have a say in this decision, or you may want your doctor’s recommendation. Either way, this information can help you make a decision.

1. Get the Facts
2. Consider Options
3. Your Feelings
4. Your Decision
At the end of treatment...

- Get information & make a plan
  - ask what you CAN do to reduce recurrence
- Understand what surveillance YOU need
- Know what symptoms to look out for
- Survivorship care plan – record treatment & forward care plan
Communicating with loved ones & others

- Our loved ones & relationships may be deeply affected
- Wish to protect others
- Complex information & uncertainty
- All have different information needs & responses
- Myths abound
- Practical barriers
Top Tips

✓ Prepare: Find a time & set the scene
✓ Talk about small stuff first
✓ Ask questions
✓ Use assertiveness - “I” rather than “you”
✓ Listen “actively” – with ears & body
✓ Feedback what you have heard
Top Tips

- Show respect (even if you don’t agree)
- Try to work out how to manage emotions
- Communicate without words – touch, hug, or a smile
- Keep working at it…
Top Clichés, Platitudes & Unhelpful Questions!

We could all get hit by a bus!

Has it all gone?

What's your cancer count?

It'll be great you can put it all behind you… what are you going to do now?

You’re lucky you had one baby/… be thankful

Don’t worry - I just know you’ll be OK

You shouldn’t stress so much

You’ve got a second chance - change your diet/exercise/ juice...

You are so brave/strong/ positive

Oh my uncle had that &.....

Gosh.. What sort of surgery did you have…?

Treatment was a small price to pay for life

We could all get hit by a bus!

How are you really?
Take some control...

✓ Plan ahead & be assertive
✓ Conversation that is too confronting

Don’t feel you have to talk about the stuff you don’t want to - You don’t owe people

“Thanks, it means a lot that you are thinking of me but it helps me to hear about your life too...”

✓ If a person who is newly diagnosed is leaning too heavily on you
✓ Horror stories

“I just want to stop you there, I only listen to stories with happy endings!”
Talking to children & young adults

- Cancer has a ripple effect on the whole family
- Children are curious & perceptive - may not understand / draw their own conclusions
- Honesty is essential for trust – balance avoidance with confrontation
Guidelines cont.

- Being aware of your own feelings / barriers
- Be sensitive to cues they want to talk
- Listen to & accept their feelings
- Repeatedly reassure children they will continue to be loved & cared for
Guidelines cont.

- Be honest, gentle & hopeful
- Use appropriate language for their age, avoid euphemisms
- There is not “one chance” to say it “perfectly”
- You will need to repeat info & introduce new info over time
- Be prepared to say repeat info or say “I don’t know”

“Lots of people recover from cancer and we are all doing our best to help Mum get well again.”
www.ovariancancer.net.au
www.cancercare.org/publications
www.livestrong.org/we-can-help/emotional-and-physical-effects-of-treatment/
communicating-with-your-health-care-team/
www.cancercouncil.com.au
www.carersnsw.asn.au
www.myparentscancer.com.au
www.canteen.org.au
www.bereavementcare.com.au
www.itsaboutus.com.au
www.headwayhealth.com.au
Thank you

Committed to improving the lives of those dealing with cancer and other health and emotional concerns

02 9453 3027  1300 611 129  info@headwayhealth.com.au

Suite 10/14 Frenchs Forest Road East, Frenchs Forest NSW 2086
www.headwayhealth.com.au
Ovarian Cancer Australia

www.ovariancancer.net.au

OCA Support and Information Line

1300660334