



Question and Answer

Stephanie Chisolm: Thank you so much. This was a very thorough program. You covered a lot of information. So we have time for a couple of questions. And I want to refer everyone to the chat box. I put in a number of links to resources that BCAN, some for our webinar, there's others for nutrition, we have a page on traveling, and a bunch of other things, including our tips for caregivers. So you can click any of those links and keep them open on your screen. When the program is over, you can download all of that information. So I'm going to hit a couple of questions that you've mentioned and see if I can get to some of those. So how can you tell if depression is a side effect of medications, or of just the general circumstances that's going on? What do you tell patients when they're coming to you and they tell you that they're depressed, and they don't know if that's because of their medication or their condition?

Dr. Diefenbach: Well, I would say that that's not too hard to figure out because depression should be listed. If it is medication related, then it should have been seen as a side effect beforehand. So you can talk to your healthcare provider to see whether depression could be a side effect of that particular kind of medication. And the health care provider will probably ask you a couple of other questions that might go to the root of that depression. If there is an indication that it might be medication related, they might be able to switch medications to something else, and then you can try out and see whether your condition improves.

Stephanie Chisolm: Okay, that's really helpful. So we know that the science is telling us that patients with bladder cancer might have more issues of depression. So when somebody feels down or if a caregiver feels that their loved one with the diagnosis is really struggling, how do they get into care? How do they bring that up with their doctors? What is your recommendation?

Dr. Diefenbach: I think so there are a number of ways that should be addressed. The first thing is that you should reach out to your provider, and ask for to speak to some of the emotional support staff that is available in any hospital, there's social workers. Or you have been in the hospital for quite some time. So you might have a bond with a nurse established, you can contact them. But I would talk to your provider first, and just say something like, "I just don't feel right. I have these kinds of symptoms. I feel tired, I don't smile anymore. I feel this plus, my sleep is not ready. I can't sleep well," or, "I sleep too

much. I can't seem to get out of bed. I don't have enjoyment in life." If you experience these kinds of symptoms, then again, talk to your provider. And they can refer you to the appropriate places.

Stephanie Chisolm: So do you often have the opportunity to connect people to a medical social worker that specializes in oncology? Is that something that they should ask for?

Dr. Diefenbach: Well, this depends on where you are being treated. If you've been treated in a larger hospital, and bladder cancer surgery is a fairly difficult surgery. So there are usually these with larger hospitals where this is performed. They should have these kinds of oncology support staff available. So you can ask for either a psychologist or for a social worker who is familiar with these kinds of issues. You don't need to talk to a bladder cancer specialist in for social support. They usually are available to talk about or for patients with all sorts of cancer issues. But somebody is I'm sure should be available.

Stephanie Chisolm: And then I think we have time for one more question, because we're a little bit over our hour. But there was a question that came in about looking into seems to be available all over the country, in many cases, medical cannabis for things like pain management. Is that something that you think people should talk to their physicians about? What are your thoughts on whether or not cannabis can be used to help handle some of the side effects, but also even some of the stressors of having bladder cancer?

Dr. Diefenbach: So, I have not much experience with that because it is depending on where you live in the country, it might be quite restricted. Not every state makes it available. These physicians in the state of New York, I know that there's a registry, and physicians need to be registered and trained in the dispensation of medical cannabis. I've heard that some patients use it. Again, I think this is something that is best addressed by your provider. In most cases, you cannot purchase a just like that off the street, and I would not necessarily advise you to purchase it off the street, because it might have... Well, then you're not dealing with medical benefits, you're good. And you might have other others other side effects that could interfere like constipation, for example. So definitely talk to your provider.

Stephanie Chisolm: And the individual provider would be the one to make that connection with using cannabis as a medical treatment. So they would have to write that prescription for you as well. So again, always check with your doctor before you do anything. I just wanted to address that question that came in. So I think this has been a very comprehensive program. Remember to go visit us at BCAN.org. We have tons and tons of various resources on sexuality and intimacy, on nutrition, on coping, a lot of different things that are out there. We really appreciate it.

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