

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A MEMBER OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL TO IMPROVE CONTACT WITH ONCOLOGICAL PATIENTS

A few assumptions, for a start:

Cancer generates huge stress – patients suffer both physically and emotionally.

Talking to a patient **is never** a waste of time.

- **Do not overuse complex medical terminology**, if you must – explain the medical terms to the patient;
- Explain complexities of laboratory tests, and medical procedures;
- Look with care at patients hospitalized **for the first time**/ who have no experience with medical care – they often do not know the procedures and regulations at a ward, so they may be confused and frightened with a new situation;
- **Be understanding** for some of the behaviours (anger, isolation, need to control the procedures), they do not mean that the patient is averse or distrustful but strongly stressed;
- Remember that **poorly treated pain** may be the cause for a worse mental state. Make sure that administered treatment is efficient. Do not hesitate to consult other specialists;
- Remember that a patient can have other, non-medical problems (family, social, economical);
- Patient's worse mental state can influence badly the treatment – weaker motivation, non-compliance with doctors' recommendations, lower tolerance for pain and other symptoms. You should **appreciate the presence of psychologist/ psychotherapist** on your ward, make them a part of your team right at the beginning of the diagnostic and treatment process, not only with "difficult cases";

- Do you believe in medicine and science progression? Ensure your patients that you do. Build up their hope, using **proves of medicine and pharmacology effectiveness in fight with cancer;**
- Whenever possible, talk to the patients about matters **unrelated to illness;**
- **Be not only a doctor, and medical authority, but a human understanding the patient's difficult situation.**

*Working with oncological patients may be stressful even for the most experienced specialists. A psychologist employed at an oncological ward is prepared to support a nurse or a doctor as well, giving them possibility to release cumulated stress and negative emotions. Working in an interdisciplinary team you may create an informal support group. There are no obstacles to do that!

Many thanks to specialists- psychooncologists, who were of great help with this article:

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With the support of European Union Erasmus+ Program

European Commission and Erasmus+ Agency do not take responsibility for the intake of the above article.

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