



# Speak Up!

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be like having an out-of-body experience. Sometimes one hears nothing after “You have cancer,” even though the doctor is still talking. How do you make informed decisions about your care?

“Deciding how much you want to know about the cancer and its treatment is the first step in being able to talk comfortably with your doctor and the rest of your cancer care team,” says the American Cancer Society. Some people want to know as much as possible upfront, while others want to be told only on a need-to-know basis. “Don’t be afraid to tell your doctor how much or how little you want to learn.”

To make sure you get the information you need, you can:

- Take notes during your appointment.
- Ask to record your talks.
- Take a family member or friend with you.

You can also write down and bring any questions you have, like:

- What type of cancer do I have? Where is it?
- What treatment do you recommend and why? What are its benefits and risks?
- What side effects can I expect, and what can be done about them?
- Can I work during treatment?
- Who and where do I call if I have

a serious problem, including after office hours? What counts as a serious problem?  
 • Who can help me deal with costs and insurance coverage?

More questions may arise during treatment. Make sure you understand what was said before you leave the office. You can ask your doctor to repeat information or to use simpler terms. Some questions may also be handled by phone or email.

“Without doubt, communication is crucial to good health care,” says RBOI social worker Wendy Hall, LCSW. “Don’t be afraid to ask questions and understand what your options are. When we take an active

role in our health care, research shows we fare much better.”

RBOI’s social workers and navigation coordinators can help you manage information from your medical team, provide counseling for you and your family, and link you to practical assistance programs. These services are available regardless of where you are being treated and at no cost to either you or your insurance. Give us a call.

## Be Your Own Advocate

“I have recently met people in the cancer arena who were dropped in the process of appropriate follow-through by the medical establishment, possibly due to the chaos of COVID-19,” says Wendy Hall, LCSW. “Being your own advocate means making your health a priority and following up with all things necessary. If you are to be scheduled for a test, and it does not happen in a timely fashion, make the call to get it moving.”

Sources:

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About 25%

Amount of information given at a medical visit that patients accurately remember

More than 90%

Patients with advanced cancer who say they want to be actively involved in their care)

75%

Patients who reported a benefit from reading their doctor’s clinical notes

2017

First publication of patient-clinician communication guidelines by the American Society of Clinical Oncology



## The Myth of the Demanding Patient

A study done at three Philadelphia hospitals debunked the myth that cancer patients make unreasonable demands for tests and treatments. Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine reported in 2015 that, contrary to expectations, “patient demands are low and cannot be a key driver of increasing health care costs.”

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