



PeopleBeatingCancer

pancreatic cancer coaching program

first questions



DAVID EMERSON
Director PeopleBeatingCancer
Cancer Survivor
Cancer Coach

introduction

My experience as a long-term cancer survivor and cancer coach is that there are two distinctly different worlds that the newly diagnosed pancreatic cancer patient must negotiate- the conventional/traditional world and the evidence-based, non-conventional world. A difficult to treat cancer like pancreatic cancer must fully utilize both of these worlds.

Your oncologist is central to managing the conventional world your pancreatic cancer successfully. Your oncologist can be an authority, a mentor, and a friend all at the same time. You need to be able to get a second opinion, you need to be able to question your oncologist's reasoning and you need to understand each other- again, all at the same time.

The questions addressing the experience of the oncologist, your diagnosis, possible therapies, and more will help you think through every aspect of your relationship with your oncologist in an effort to cover as many key issues as possible.

questions to ask your healthcare team¹

QUESTIONS ABOUT A DOCTOR'S EXPERIENCE

- How many people with pancreatic cancer do you care for each year?
- What have been the results for these patients? Did they have a similar diagnosis?
- Do you work with a team of expert physicians to manage care? Who are they and what are their specialties?

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR DIAGNOSIS

- What is my diagnosis? What type of pancreatic cancer do I have?
- What is the stage of my cancer? What does this mean?
- What are the symptoms that I may experience from the cancer?

QUESTIONS ABOUT TREATMENT

- What treatment(s) do you recommend? Why?
- Are there any clinical trials available to me at this hospital? At other local hospitals?
- Do you provide molecular profiling or refer patients to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network's Know Your Tumor® precision medicine service to help determine treatment options?
- What are the potential benefits and risks of each of my treatment options?
- Explain the medications being prescribed for me. What does each one do?
- What type of blood tests, scans or other tests will I need during my treatment? How often?

QUESTIONS ABOUT SURGERY

- Can my tumor be removed through surgery? Why or why not?
- How many pancreatic surgeries have you performed? How many in the past year?
- How many pancreatic surgeries are performed at your hospital every year?
- What are the possible complications of pancreatic surgery?
- How long should I expect to be in the hospital recovering after pancreatic surgery?
- Would you be able to recommend another experienced surgeon for a second opinion?

QUESTIONS ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS

- What are the potential side effects of my treatment options? How likely are they to occur?
- How can I expect to feel during the treatment?
- What medication(s) will be prescribed to help manage my side effects? Do these medications have additional side effects?
- How can I contact you in case of an emergency or if I have further concerns?

QUESTIONS ABOUT DIET

- Do I need to change or modify my diet?
- Do you have a dietitian that you recommend?
- Will I need to take pancreatic enzymes or vitamins? If so, how often?

QUESTIONS ABOUT SOCIAL CONCERNS

- Will my ability to work, travel or drive be affected?
- Will I need to spend time in the hospital?
- Will I have physical limitations?
- Are there any lifestyle changes I should make?
- What support programs are available for me and my family?
- Who can I speak with about my financial and/or insurance concerns?
- Who can help me navigate the medical system? Is there an oncology social worker or patient navigator available at this hospital?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Does the doctor seem interested in my questions? Is the communication easy?
- Did I get enough time with the doctor to answer all of my questions?
- Do I feel comfortable with the doctor and his/her recommendations?
- Will I be able to reach him/her if I have any questions or concerns while being treated?
- Is the doctor open to me seeking a second opinion?

FOOTNOTES

1. <https://www.pancan.org/facing-pancreatic-cancer/diagnosis/choosing-your-healthcare-team/questions-to-ask-your-healthcare-team/>