

Cancer researchers highlight the importance of social support

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Researchers at the John Theurer Cancer Center recently published a study delineating the connection of social support to distress after stem cell transplants. Scott Rowley, M.D., Chief, Blood & Marrow Stem Cell Transplantation Program, the John Theurer Cancer Center at Hackensack University Medical Center contributed to the study which was led by Larissa E. Labay from Mt. Sinai. The study was published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, a peer-reviewed publication produced by the American Psychological Association.

The importance of patient satisfaction and the patient experience has been increasingly gaining attention in the medical field as an essential element of improving outcomes. This study represents another important indicator of this relationship. Over 230 men and women who were one to three years post-transplant completed questionnaires to examine the correlation of partner support and distress levels. Results indicate that those patients with more partner support experienced less distress, an important fact given the physical and psychological stress associated with transplant procedures.

"We conduct over 300 transplants a year, making us one of the busiest BMT programs in the country. For each transplant we do our best to consider the patient's full psychosocial situation in order to maximize their quality of life," said Dr. Rowley. "This study helps explain why this facet of care is so important and elucidates the connection between support and distress."

The John Theurer Cancer Center recently opened a 165,000 square-foot comprehensive cancer care center designed specifically to be patient-centric, providing a myriad of offerings including an innovative hands-on digital patient library, a demonstration kitchen dedicated to educating patients/families on how to eat healthy during cancer treatment, and a 40-foot living wall made of various plant species, one of the first to be implemented in a US hospital. The John Theurer Cancer Center also offers multiple opportunities for patients and their caregivers and families to receive support much in the same way as highlighted in this study.

"We are dedicated to providing extraordinary care to every patient who walks through our doors," says Andrew L. Pecora, M.D., F.A.C.P., C.P.E., Chief Innovations Officer and Professor and Vice President of Cancer Services at the John Theurer Cancer Center. "This study helps reveal both the breadth and depth of this mission by pointing to the importance of support to the well-being of patients who have undergone a transplant."

Provided by John Theurer Cancer Center

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