

Studies reveal new strategies to improve quality of life

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Key studies released today at the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) identify new strategies for easing the short- and long-term effects of cancer therapy and improving the quality of life of patients with cancer, as well as their caregivers.

"We've made incredible strides in cancer treatment, and more cancer survivors are alive today than ever before. But oncology isn't just about helping people live longer – we need to ensure that [patients](#) have the best quality of life possible at every stage of their cancer journey, from active treatment through survivorship," said press briefing moderator Patricia Ganz, MD, FASCO, ASCO Expert and director of Cancer Prevention and Control Research at the Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

"Today's research reveals new ways of making patients' lives better, from when we can safely scale back treatment, to a simple new approach for preserving young women's fertility during cancer treatment. We're also seeing that earlier use of [palliative care](#) enhances the lives of not only patients with [advanced cancer](#), but their caregivers as well," said Dr. Ganz.

Key studies include:

LHRH analog goserelin helps preserve fertility among women undergoing chemotherapy for hormone receptor-negative [breast cancer](#):

New phase III study demonstrates that hormone therapy with goserelin dramatically reduces the risk of chemotherapy-associated premature ovarian failure among women with early-stage hormone receptor-negative breast cancer. Women who received the additional therapy were more likely to conceive following [cancer treatment](#), and even had improved survival.

Less frequent (every three month) [zoledronic acid](#) is safe, and provides comparable protection against fractures and other skeletal changes in women with breast cancer and bone metastases, compared to the standard monthly treatment: Following a year of standard treatment, less frequent dosing of zoledronic acid had similar side effects without compromising efficacy among women with breast cancer and bone metastases. These findings suggest that less frequent treatments are just as effective for such patients and reduce the burden and cost of treatments.

Lower-dose radiation therapy is safe for certain patients with lower-risk, HPV-positive head and neck cancer: An NIH-funded, phase II study shows that lower-dose IMRT results in 95 percent two-year survival rates among patients with better-prognosis, HPV-positive head and neck cancer. This new approach also spares many patients from debilitating, often life-long side effects of treatment.

Early, phone-based, palliative care support improves caregiver quality of life: A phone-based palliative care intervention helps alleviate caregiver depression and burden, especially if it is offered early after a patient's diagnosis of cancer. While previous studies have found substantial benefits from palliative care for patients with advanced [cancer](#), this study emphasizes its importance for caregivers as well.

Discontinuing statins near the end of life is safe, improves patient quality of life: For patients with a life-limiting illness, stopping statins in the last

year of life improves quality of life without compromising survival. This includes reduced headache, muscle pain and inflammation, drowsiness, and dizziness, as well as substantially reduces the cost of care.

Provided by American Society of Clinical Oncology

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