

## Parents of child cancer patients prefer honesty, study finds

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Parents say they're less anxious, better able to plan.

(HealthDay)—It's better for doctors to be open with parents about their child's cancer prognosis, even if the news is bad, researchers say.

Doing so is more likely to give [parents](#) peace of mind and hope rather than increase their anxiety or cause them to become despondent, the study found.

"Providing families with a full explanation of the likely course of a disease is critical to helping them plan and have reasonable expectations about the outcome of treatment," said study leader Dr. Jonathan Marron, of Dana-Farber/Boston Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Center.

Researchers asked 353 parents of children newly diagnosed with cancer about their discussions with their child's doctors and whether those conversations had a negative or positive effect.

Among parents of children with poorer prognoses, those who received an honest appraisal said they gained peace of mind and had greater trust in the doctors. Parents who got more information were not significantly more anxious, depressed or less hopeful than those who received less information, the study found.

The findings are to be presented May 30 at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, in Chicago. Findings presented at meetings are considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

"Most agree that patients and families should know as much about their diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis that physicians can give them," Marron said in a society news release.

"At the same time, data have suggested that some oncologists are reluctant to discuss the details of prognosis with patients and their families out of concern that it might cause unnecessary anxiety and lead to depression. Our study suggests that such concerns are largely unwarranted," he said.

What's needed now, Marron added, is more research to determine if the information provided by oncologists is fully absorbed and understood by families.

**More information:** The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more about [cancer in children and teens](#).

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