



Cancer Care for the Whole Patient: Meeting Psychosocial Health Needs

Committee on Psychosocial Services to Cancer Patients/Families in a Community Setting, Nancy E. Adler, Ann E. K. Page, Board on Health Care Services, Institute of Medicine

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Cancer care today often provides state-of-the-science biomedical treatment, but fails to address the psychological and social (psychosocial) problems associated with the illness. This failure can compromise the effectiveness of health care and thereby adversely affect the health of cancer patients. Psychological and social problems created or exacerbated by cancer--including depression and other emotional problems; lack of information or skills needed to manage the illness; lack of transportation or other resources; and disruptions in work, school, and family life--cause additional suffering, weaken adherence to prescribed treatments, and threaten patients' return to health.

Today, it is not possible to deliver high-quality cancer care without using existing approaches, tools, and resources to address patients' psychosocial health needs. All patients with cancer and their families should expect and receive cancer care that ensures the provision of appropriate psychosocial health services.

Cancer Care for the Whole Patient recommends actions that oncology providers, health policy makers, educators, health insurers, health planners, researchers and research sponsors, and consumer advocates should undertake to ensure that this standard is met.

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