

Finding and Evaluating Resources

What are resources?

Resources provide you with information about your cancer experience. A resource can be something that you read, a person that you talk to or an organization that helps you. Many different resources offer advice and information for cancer survivors.

After your treatment is over, you may be tired of reading about cancer. That's understandable. But learning about aftereffects of your cancer and the research that's going on in the area of survivorship can help improve your quality of life after cancer.

How can resources help a survivor?

Resources can help you in many different areas of your life.

You can find out how to:

- Determine your cancer or treatment's effects on your body
- Manage side effects
- Communicate with your health care team
- Take a more active role in your health care
- Find a good doctor or treatment center near where you live
- Deal with the emotional effects of cancer
- Get help with your financial problems
- Get involved in public policy and advocacy

What are some resources for survivors?

Internet: You can find all sorts of information on the Internet. You can find articles from medical journals, chat rooms for survivors, people's personal Web sites about cancer and much more. Because publishing information on the Internet is so easy, it's important to evaluate it. Giving out personal information to any Web site is not a good idea unless you can find out how they will use that information and why they need it.

Printed materials: Many books, magazines and pamphlets contain cancer information. As with information on the Internet, publishing printed materials is easy. You should always evaluate printed materials to make sure they are accurate and right for you.

Health care team: This may be how you usually find information about your health. Your health care team should tell you about research that is currently going on that may affect your life after cancer. Your team can also answer any questions you have and direct you to other resources. Each health care team member has a different level of knowledge. It is OK to get second opinions and discuss what one member of your health care team says with other members of your health care team.

Cancer organizations: Many organizations provide information for cancer survivors either through their Web sites, printed materials or employees who can answer your questions. Cancer organizations are a great way to access many different cancer resources at once. Even though a cancer organization is providing the information, evaluating the information is still important to make sure it is accurate and right for you.

Friends and family: Many people get lots of advice from friends and families. Other survivors may also offer you advice about what helped them through their treatment. Even though most people are trying to offer you helpful information, evaluating the information you get from friends and family is still important. Not all of it may be helpful or right for you. Talk to your health care team about this information.

How do I evaluate a resource?

Finding information about cancer is much easier now than it was a few years ago. New cancer organizations are forming and established organizations are offering new services to help cancer survivors. Many books and magazines have been written on cancer, and new ones are published yearly. Also, the Internet has become a valuable and important way to share information about cancer and cancer treatment.

Many resources are available. Sometimes so much information exists that it can be overwhelming. Just because information is published in a book or posted on the Internet, it doesn't mean that it is accurate or right for you.

When you evaluate written material or information on the Internet, you should find out:

Who wrote the information: Any specific advice or health information on a Web site should be followed by the information's source. If the source is an organization, research more about the organization and who writes the information for the resources that they provide. If the source is a person, look for his or her professional credentials and whether s/he is affiliated with an institution.

Below is a list of common credentials you might see next to a person's name:

- ✓ MSW=Masters of Social Work
- ✓ PhD=Doctorate of Philosophy
- ✓ MD= Medical Doctor
- ✓ DO=Doctor of Osteopathy
- ✓ RN=Registered Nurse
- ✓ Esq. or JD=Law Degree
- ✓ MSN=Masters of Science in Nursing
- ✓ MPH=Masters of Public Health

When the information was written: Because research about cancer and survivorship is ongoing, new information is being written constantly. Information printed or published on a Web site could change. A good resource will always list the date that the information was published. If the information wasn't written within the past year, the information could have changed.

Who paid for or published the information: Sometimes private companies (such as a pharmaceutical company) sponsor resources, especially Web sites. While sponsorship does not automatically make the information unreliable, be cautious if they are promoting a certain drug or asking you to buy something.

What your health care team thinks of the information: This step is very important in evaluating a resource. Even if the information is written by a qualified health professional, is recent, and is published in a trusted resource, it may not be right for you. Also, your health care team can help explain any parts of the information that seem confusing or unclear.

When you evaluate an organization, you should find out:

What kind of services the organization offers

- Who works for the organization (whether they have social workers, doctors, nurses or other health care professionals on staff)
- How often the organization updates the information they provide
- What your health care team thinks of the organization

You can find out more about an organization by looking at their Web site or calling an information line.

When you evaluate information you get from another person, you should find out:

- Where the person got this information
- What your health care team thinks of the information

This document was produced in collaboration with:

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Works Cited

Willis, Joanie. The Cancer Patient's Workbook. Dorling Kindersley, 2001.
Facing Forward Life After Cancer Treatment: A Guide for People Who Were Treated for Cancer. National Cancer Institute, NIH Publication No. 02-2424, April 2002. 1-800-4-CANCER.

Local Resources

Cancer Lifeline Seattle

Dorothy S. O'Brien Center
6522 Fremont Ave N
Seattle, WA 98103
206-297-2100
www.cancerlifeline.org

Seattle Cancer Care Alliance

Social Work Department
825 Eastlake Ave E
PO Box 19023
Seattle WA 98109-1023
206-288-1076
e-mail socialw@seattlecca.org

Works Cited

Lance Armstrong Foundation Survivorship Topics
www.livestrong.org

Willis, Joanie. The Cancer Patient's Workbook. Dorling Kindersley, 2001.

Facing Forward Life After Cancer Treatment: A Guide for People Who Were Treated for Cancer. National Cancer Institute, NIH Publication No. 02-2424, April 2002. 1-800-4-CANCER.