



HEALTH AWARENESS

Surviving Blood Cancers Advances in Treatment: Staying Informed

(NAPSA)—In recent years, new and better treatments have dramatically increased the survival rates of patients with leukemia, Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphoma and myeloma—blood cancers that originate in the bone marrow or lymphatic tissues. Now, more than ever, patients need to stay informed about the growing number of treatment choices in order to make the best decisions about their care.

“It is exciting to have new weapons in the fight against cancer, and it’s important for patients to learn all they can about them. When people are diagnosed with a blood cancer, the decisions they make can be critical,” said Robin Kornhaber, MSW, Senior Vice President, Patient Services, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, the largest voluntary health organization dedicated to blood cancer research, education and patient service.


Today, patients have many more treatment options than they did years ago. There are nearly 50 different drugs to treat blood cancers.

To help patients keep up to date with new developments, the Society provides programs ranging from community-based “Learn from the Expert” forums to national teleconferences and live Webcasts. Last year alone, the Society had more than 200,000 contacts with patients and families.

A good place to start gathering information is the Society’s Information Resource Center (IRC), staffed by social workers, nurses and health educators. The IRC

helps patients and caregivers find out about promising new therapies and cancer clinical trials, financial aid, education programs and a number of different support groups.

Kornhaber offers the following advice to help people as they navigate the extensive information available and learn to cope with their disease.

617,000 Americans have leukemia, Hodgkin or non-Hodgkin lymphoma or myeloma. Every five minutes, someone new is diagnosed with blood cancer. Every nine minutes, someone dies. 

• **Get the most accurate information about the disease.**

Learn about your specific disease type and the latest treatments available, clinical trials, how to find a specialist, second opinions.

• **Be prepared with a list of questions.** Prepare a list of questions in advance when calling or talking to your doctor. It is easy to forget your questions if you feel rushed or upset. Bring someone with you to write down the answers to your questions, or bring a tape recorder so you can record the doctor’s explanations.

• **Learn how to best communicate with your health care team.** Your health care team is the primary resource for treatment advice and recommendations. Good communication can be maintained by establishing an open and trusting relationship with your medical professionals, which means consulting with

them about treatments recommended elsewhere, asking doctors to repeat or explain anything that is confusing, and understanding the role of each member of the treatment team.

• **Take advantage of free educational programs.** Participating in live educational programs, teleconferences or Webcasts will give you the opportunity to listen and learn about your disease from top medical experts. You can also hear what others with similar concerns have to say.

• **Seek support.** Feelings of confusion, loneliness and isolation are common to anyone with a serious illness. Reaching out to your peers, professionals, family members, or others can strengthen your ability to cope with the disease.

“When you are diagnosed with cancer, the information you receive can affect the rest of your life. I relied on the staff of the IRC to put me in the right direction. This is a great resource center, where you can get so much critical information all in one place,” said Leigh Jenkins, a survivor of Hodgkin lymphoma.

With a network of 60 chapters, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society provides community-based education programs and services throughout the country. **Contact the IRC at 800-955-4572 or visit www.leukemia-lymphoma.org** for more information, including free booklets and publications on leukemia, Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphoma and myeloma, or to inquire about educational and support programs.