



James Graham Brown Cancer Center

Survivorship Care at the Brown Cancer Center

We are all survivors from day one and beyond

Chemobrain and How it Affects Cancer Survivors?

“CHEMOBRAIN”: Chemo brain is a common term used by cancer survivors to describe thinking and memory problems that can occur after cancer treatment.



Though chemobrain is a widely used term, it is misleading since chemotherapy is not the only cause of concentration and memory problems (also called cognitive impairment) that can occur in cancer survivors. Researchers have shown that cognitive impairment experienced by cancer patients is the result of several factors including radiation, hormonal treatments, surgery, anesthesia, pain, fatigue, medications, depression, stress, anxiety and others. In fact,

chemobrain has also been demonstrated in cancer patients who have not yet even received chemotherapy. Therefore, many physicians prefer the term, cancer-related cognitive impairment (CRCI), instead of chemobrain.

Patients with CRCI can experience a variety of changes in thinking across the course of their treatment and survivorship. They may complain that it takes them longer to understand and learn new material, and they may find that their ability to retain new information is diminished. They also complain of slowed thinking and concentration difficulties. Patients can have forgetfulness with trouble retrieving names and words.

Accurately assessing a patient’s cognitive ability is crucial to developing an effective treatment plan. A test called a neuropsychological assessment is considered the gold standard in testing for chemobrain. This is a test often conducted by a psychologist that involves a review of medical records, a detailed interview with the patient and written psychological testing. Results of the neuropsychological evaluation are then used to determine the best treatment strategies. Treatments include patient education, behavioral strategies, cognitive rehabilitation, brain training and physical exercise. The use of medications may also be beneficial.

Finally, it is important to highlight that only a subset of patients experience chemobrain and although it can be bothersome, the changes are generally mild and are expected to resolve in the months and years after treatment for most patients.

- Eric C. Burton, MD, Neuro-oncology

Cancer Stress – Before, During and After Treatment

When you are diagnosed with cancer, your world is turned upside down. Everything feels off and you are consumed with many emotions that can include all or some of the following: denial, anger, fear, worry, stress, shock, anxiety, sadness, depression, guilt, loneliness, feeling out of control, and even gratitude. Whatever the emotion, it ALL feels overwhelming AND IT'S ALL NORMAL. You may experience these feelings before, during and after treatment. In fact, some people who have relatively low stress before or during treatment, have high levels of stress and anxiety once treatment is finished. Feelings aren't wrong so let yourself feel what you need to feel, honor those feelings and be kind to yourself.

Here are a few tips to manage/reduce stress:

- Ask for help
- Look for ways to relax
- Schedule social activities
- Practice meditation, deep breathing, yoga
- Prioritize routine tasks
- Join a support group
- Talk about your feelings
- Keep a journal
- Be aware of your limits
- Concentrate on things you can control

Local Resources:

Gilda's Club is a free program that includes support groups for all ages, cancer related education classes, healthy lifestyle classes, social activities and resources/referrals - 502-583-0075

Friend for Life will match you with a cancer survivor who can provide support and encouragement because they have been there and they understand what you are going through -502-893-0643

Livestrong through YMCA – provide free or low cost customized exercise regimens catered to your individual needs from certified fitness instructors trained in supportive cancer care – contact your local YMCA or go to www.livestrong.org

M. Krista Lloyd Resource Center located on the 1st floor of the U of L Brown Cancer Center provides several free services for BCC patients including massage, art and Reiki therapies – 502-562-4158

- Kim Williams, LCSW & Sandra Krekel, LCSW

What are our patients *thankful* for this holiday season?

- The love of my family.
- My sister is a survivor!
- The wonderful people at the BCC for allowing me to be here another Christmas!
- Thankful for my wife Linda who got me through Cancer treatment and the BCC!
- All the blessings in my life, especially the BCC!
- I am thankful for Connie!
- For family and friends, waking up each morning!
- Thankful for Dr. Nelson, Dr. Riley, Sandy and all the nurses.
- Thankful for Dr. Kloecker and the BCC!
- For family, friends and God's grace.
- Great nurses who take great care of my family!
- To still be here.
- The medical assistants, they are so welcoming!
- Having a happy, healthy family!
- Cancer free as of 11/29/17!!
- Time with family and friends