

Parenting with Cancer April 19

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Advanced Practice Provider

Advanced Practice Provider webinar created and coordinated by Nancy Fitzgerald, unclcn@unc.edu, in partnership with UNC Lineberger Cancer Network. This program is provided with UNC digital and clinical learning.

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UNC Lineberger Cancer Network


ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDER

April 19, 2023

Parenting with Cancer




Justin Michael Yopp, PhD



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OUR PRESENTER



Justin Michael Yopp, PhD

Justin Yopp, PhD, is a clinical psychologist and Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at UNC. He serves as Program Director for the UNC Comprehensive Cancer Support Program at the North Carolina Cancer Hospital where he provides psychotherapeutic services for children, adolescents, and adults impacted by cancer.

Dr. Yopp co-leads the Parenting with Cancer Clinic at UNC. He also co-leads the Widowed Parent Project and co-authored the book, *The Group: Seven Widowed Fathers Reimagine Life*, published by Oxford University Press.

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OUR PRESENTER

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What one word comes to mind when you hear the sentence "Parenting with cancer"?

* No responses received yet. They will appear here.

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What one word comes to mind when you hear the sentence "Parenting with cancer"?

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Parenting with Cancer

Justin M. Yopp, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry
Program Director, Comprehensive Cancer Support Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Why Parents?

- Affects an entire family
- Increased risk for depression, anxiety; disruption to family roles & routines (Nilsson et al., 2009; Semple et al., 2010)
- Impacts treatment decision-making (Check et al., 2017)
- Alters children's life trajectories


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Across the Illness Continuum


- Diagnosis | Recurrence
- During Treatment
- Parents with Advanced Cancer
- End-of-Life



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Location
Location
Location



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Communication

Communication

Communication



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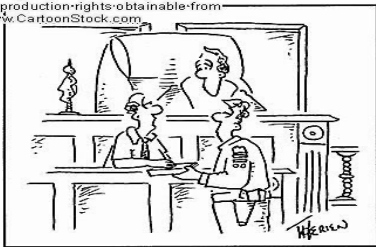
At Diagnosis (or Recurrence)

- **To Tell or Not to Tell?**
- Parental instinct to protect
- "What if my children _____?"
- "What if they ask if I'm going to die?"

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At Diagnosis

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"You want the truth, the whole truth
or nothing but the truth?"

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**Establishing
and
Maintaining
Trust**

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At Diagnosis

- When: 1st to tell; control the narrative
- What: name it; anticipate changes
- How: model showing emotion
- Encourage questions; start of convo
- Provider's role: empower parents

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UNC LINEBERGER COMPREHENSIVE
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Which of the following should parents consider when communicating with their children about cancer?

Be honest
Name the word 'cancer'
Encourage Questions
All of the above

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Throughout Treatment

- Two keys for parenting:
 - Emotional availability
 - Maintaining consistency

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**Throughout Treatment:
Emotional Availability**

- Important → ongoing conversation...
- Update as needed; check-ins
- “How can I tell how my kid is doing?”
 - While driving; laying in bed
 - Mad-Happy-Sad-Thankful game

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**Throughout Treatment:
Maintaining Consistency**

- The ideal – not reality
- Finding a temporary normal; adapting to shifting roles/responsibilities
- Keep behavioral expectations
- Reassuring to children that not *everything* has changed

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Throughout Treatment

- Aside from concerns of death, parenting issues are similar among parents with met or non-met cancer (Park et al., 2019)
- Parenting concerns = depression, anxiety, low QOL in parents (Park et al., 2016; Park et al., 2018)

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Parenting with Advanced Cancer

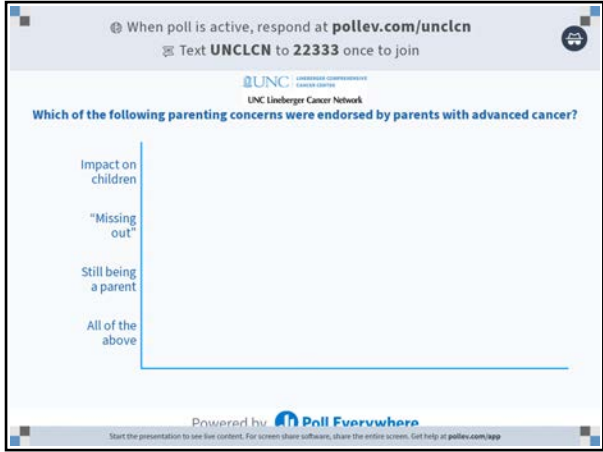
- Parenting concerns in parents with advanced cancer is associated with depression, anxiety, low QOL
(Park et al., 2016; Park et al., 2018)

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Parenting with Advanced Cancer

- Four themes: (Park et al., 2017)
 - Concerns about impact on child
 - “missing out”
 - Still being a parent
 - Treatment decision-making

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Parenting with Advanced Cancer

- Patients who are parents are more likely to pursue aggressive treatments (Kiebert et al., 1994)
- Maximizing time with children and preserving parental functioning are priorities (Check et al., 2017)

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Untapped Wisdom

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Widowed Fathers

- Top 4 communication priorities with dying mother: (Park et al, 2017)
 - Raising children in ways that reflect her hopes/values
 - How she wants to be remembered
 - Whether/how to talk with the children about impending death
 - Whether how to talk with children about her death after she dies

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Widowed Fathers

- Four themes of care delivery: (Park et al, 2015)
 - Clear communication from the medical team (*avoid avoiding*)
 - Earlier prognostic information
 - Specific information about EOL
 - Bedside manner

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UNC Lineberger Cancer Network

Which of the following were endorsed by widowed fathers as priorities when communicating with their wives' medical team?


- Clear communication
- Earlier prognostic information
- Specific information about end-of-life
- All of the above

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End-of-Life: Talking with Children


- Much depends on situation; child's age
- Explanations reflect care goals; what doctors expect to happen
- "No other medicines to try"
- No one's fault
- Decide/explain where the child will live



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End-of-Life: Continuing Bonds

- Leave tangible legacies
- Drawings, photo albums
- Tell stories/reflect together
- Write letters



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Innovative Programs at UNC



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Parenting with Cancer Clinic at UNC

- Launches next week for parents w/ cancer who have minor-age children
- Every Wednesday afternoon; no charge
- Two broad areas:
 - 1) Intrafamilial communication, support, and coping
 - 2) Custody & estate planning issues

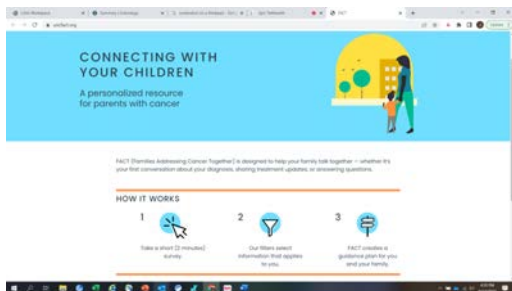
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Families Addressing Cancer Together (FACT)

- A web-based intervention for parents with cancer (Park et al. 2022)
- Aim is to help parents communicate with their children about cancer
- Will be accessible broadly
- Watch this space!

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Families Addressing Cancer Together FACT



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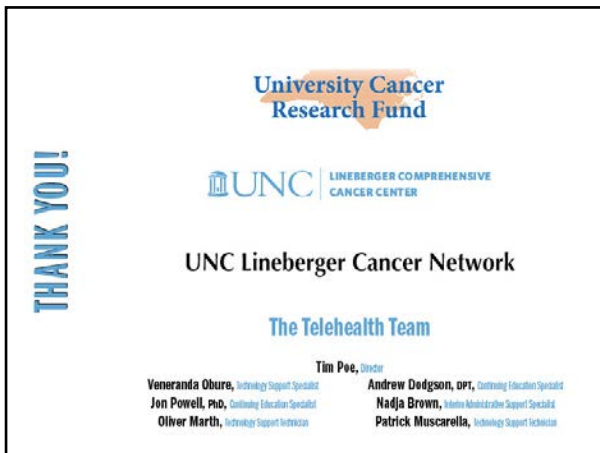
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Discussion

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