


# Chapter 22

## Psychological Support and Well-Being Interventions for Cancer Patients and Their Families: A Dual Perspective

Aastha Dhingra

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8081-0246>

Polaris Hospital, India

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter delves into the intricate psychological journey experienced by cancer patients and their families, highlighting the profound emotional challenges that arise. It begins with a personal and professional exploration of the author's insights, setting the foundation for understanding the mental toll of diagnosis. It also discusses breaking the news of cancer, emphasizing sensitive yet effective communication strategies for both patients and their families, psychological approaches for supporting family members, how they process and accept the diagnosis. Special focus is given to caregiver stress management, acknowledging the emotional burden and risk of burnout. The chapter also covers managing interactions with visitors, establishing boundaries, and ensuring a supportive environment. Psychological interventions, practical insights, and recommendations for healthcare providers are provided, incorporating family dynamics and cultural nuances to offer a holistic approach to care.*

### INTRODUCTION

The moment cancer enters a family's life, everything changes. The diagnosis itself is a turning point, and for many families, it feels like an irreversible journey. In India, where cancer is still viewed as a near-death sentence, breaking the news to loved ones becomes an incredibly difficult task. Often, patients and families are left in shock, unsure of what to do next (Biondo et al., 2009). Cancer, being such an unexplored illness in many ways, brings with it a sense of helplessness. Though advancements have

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been made, the treatment options remain limited for many types of cancers, and the emotional toll on both the patient and their family is immense (Holland & Alici, 2010).

This is where the integration of psychological support alongside medical care becomes critical. Cancer treatment is not just about chemotherapy, surgeries, or medication; it is equally about emotional resilience and mental well-being (Ferrell & Coyle, 2010). As a clinical psychologist, I have seen firsthand the transformative power of psychological support. Having a psycho-oncologist on board is not just a luxury; it is a necessity (Hudson & Payne, 2011). The ability to think clearly, respond to treatment with positivity, and hold onto hope—all this stems from emotional and psychological strength. The right kind of psychological intervention can significantly boost a patient's willpower and their ability to face such a life-altering disease (Folkman, 2013).

My connection to this topic goes beyond professional knowledge. Very recently, two of my own family members passed away due to cancer. One of them wasn't even properly diagnosed until the very end. He had a rare form of liver cancer, something so obscure that it hardly found mention in textbooks (Kristjanson et al., 2006). The treatment options, as a result, were severely limited. As someone who has studied psychology, I found myself feeling helpless. What I had learned couldn't fully prepare me to support my family because we were dealing with an illness that wasn't even properly identified. Answering my family's questions or offering them emotional reassurance became a challenge when even the doctors couldn't provide clear answers (Lee & Park, 2020).

This experience was eye-opening. It pushed me to further my knowledge, to study and understand the rarest of cancers, and to realize the vital role that psychological support plays in such cases. It was a period of intense learning for me, both professionally and personally (Neimeyer, 2001). And now, as I sit to write this chapter, my aim is to share my knowledge, hoping that my experience can help even one person navigate through their cancer journey. If my words can provide comfort, guidance, or strength to anyone dealing with this illness, I would consider it a privilege (Puchalski & Ferrell, 2010).

In this chapter, I bring forth not just a professional perspective but also the emotional weight of someone who has lived through the distress of seeing a loved one suffer from cancer. Psychological support and well-being interventions, when integrated properly, can bring about powerful change—not just for patients but for their families as well. My hope is to shed light on this dual perspective, helping both patients and families find the strength to endure the journey ahead (Kissane, 2021).

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY**

### **My Dual Role as a Family Member and Psychologist**

Navigating cancer in the family while simultaneously fulfilling my professional role as a psychologist was both emotionally challenging and mentally exhausting. On one hand, I had to be a daughter, a sister, and a caregiver; on the other, I had to be a clinical psychologist who remained composed, offering emotional and psychological guidance. Balancing these two roles was not easy. As a family member, I felt the grief, helplessness, and fear that comes with watching a loved one suffer. But as a psychologist,

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