

Understanding family needs and the importance of family assessment in cancer care

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Aims

- ▶ This presentation will discuss the:
 - Diversity of family needs
 - Importance of family assessment
 - Strategies for completing family assessment
 - Benefits of tailored support



Importance of family

- ▶ Family has a **strong influence on the health** of its members and understanding their needs improves the family's ability to maintain family functioning (Coyne, 2013; Northouse, 2012)
- ▶ During adversity family members will often experience challenges in their own health (Applebaum & Breitbart, 2013)
- ▶ Family will often **fail to seek help** as they feel lost in the health system (Coyne, 2013).



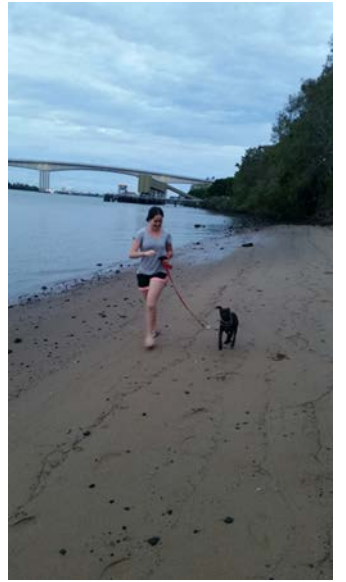
Family functioning with cancer

- ▶ Families will aim to work together after the diagnosis
- ▶ **Family roles will change** after cancer diagnosis, particularly during treatment
- ▶ Not all families will **deal constructively** with the change
- ▶ **Communication** within the family is the main influencing factor for seeking help and doing well



The importance of family assessment

- ▶ Who is family? family members, friends
- ▶ What differences do they bring
- ▶ **Strengths they use**
 - Communication styles [influences relationships]
 - *he didn't really talk to anyone*
 - *talk about how we were going to handle it all*
 - Commitment to one another
 - *you know everyone had their own different way of sharing with the family*
 - *Have to be there for her*



Family assessment

- ▶ What **resources** do they normally use
 - Health professionals or just family?
 - *I didn't need to go to a stranger*
- ▶ What other challenges have the family worked through before
 - *I just sort of go along with the flow*
 - *We discuss it and share it.*
- ▶ Has the family had **major role changes** since the cancer diagnosis
 - *Hard not being able to do your role, you should be able to look after your family*



Strategies for completing family assessment

- ▶ **Encourage talking**
- ▶ Focus on the good things that the family is doing
 - It is good to see your family here today, how are they going?
- ▶ **Acknowledge change of roles within the family**
 - You said that your children are helping with the washing, how is that going? They must like being able to help!
- ▶ **In your family how do you share if you are upset?**
 - This is an opening for understanding how the family shares emotion
- ▶ **Who is most the affected in the family by the cancer?**
 - This allows for the discussion on how the partner, parents and children are going

How can I be most helpful for you today?

Benefits of tailored support

- ▶ **Conversations with the nurse increases the families engagement and trust with the nurse**
- ▶ Reinforces the family strengths
- ▶ Assists family to find external help

- ▶ **Allows time for the family to share their burden with understanding and not judgement**

- ▶ What one question would you like answered by the nurse today?



Why does family assessment work?

- ▶ **Appraisal and sense of challenge** – predicted use of external resources (Dieperink, Coyne, Creedy, & Ostergaard, 2016)
- ▶ Helping the family to see the cancer as a manageable challenge increased their use of external resources (Coyne, Grafton, Reid, & Marshall, 2016)
- ▶ Families whose emotional and information needs are met are more likely to ask for help.



Summary

- ▶ Understanding family needs is important as they may have more unmet needs.
- ▶ Families who can communicate openly about their needs and distress are also more likely to ask for help from health professionals.

Family who doesn't ask, need even more help!

