

American Cancer Society Empowers Women with Online Tools

By Linda Barlow | October 16, 2013

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time when our nation's collective psyche is meant to focus on the research and support needed by the millions of Americans who have been diagnosed with or have survived breast cancer.

For those of us living with breast cancer, that focus extends beyond the month of October. Indeed, we need year-round support and information to help us take charge of our own breast health. Here, in the first of two posts spotlighting organizations that are equipping patients to do just that, we are excited to profile the American Cancer Society's (ACS) online tools.



ACS has a variety of free programs and services to help patients manage cancer treatments and recovery and find the emotional support they need. The organization also has an online portal with information about everything from how to make treatment decisions and cope with side effects to how to handle financial matters and live well after cancer. According to Dr. Terri Ades, Director of Cancer Information at ACS, millions of people visit the site's breast cancer-related pages every year.

"Women can and will make good decisions about their health if they have access to the information that will help them make those good decisions," Dr. Ades said in an interview last week. "Thanks, in part, to information about the progress being made in mammography and breast cancer research, we saw a dramatic decrease in breast cancer incidence from 2002 to 2003. Such a reduction in incidence is reflective of how information can influence women's health decisions."

In addition to a wealth of information, the online portal offers easy-to-use tools to help people cope with their cancer treatment:

- [Find a treatment center](#): This includes searchable databases and directories for hospitals, health care facilities and physician information, also offering information about services, available treatments, and doctor specialties to help find the right treatment center. This page also links to the American College of Surgeons' [National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers](#), which identifies those health care facilities that meet strict standards for breast cancer services.
- [Questions to ask your doctor](#): Printable PDFs (including one focusing specifically on breast cancer) provide lists of questions patients can ask their cancer care team to better understand their cancer and their options.
- [Guide to cancer drugs](#): Designed to be a supplement to a doctor's information, this is a searchable database of cancer treatment medicines and commonly used medicines that people with cancer may be taking to relieve symptoms. I found this page to be particularly useful in helping me to understand the side effects of the [Tamoxifen](#) I'm taking to keep my breast cancer from recurring.
- [Insurance resources](#): These offer a number of links to help both uninsured and underinsured patients.
- [Pain diary](#): Includes a printable PDF to help patients evaluate their pain and describe it to loved ones and care teams.
- [Side effects trackers](#): PDF worksheets to help patients keep track of their side effects and medications so they can better communicate with their health care team.
- [Clinical trials matching service](#): Information about a free, confidential program that helps patients, their families and health care team find cancer clinical trials most appropriate to their medical and personal situation.
- [Survivorship care plans](#): A variety of guidelines for monitoring and maintaining patients' health as they move beyond their cancer treatment.

The portal also offers a search-by-cancer type function, which, for breast cancer, provided the following topic pages:

- [For women facing a breast biopsy](#)
- [Treatment for breast cancer](#)
- [Breast reconstruction after mastectomy](#)

- [After treatment for breast cancer](#)
- [Reach to Recovery](#)
- [tlc – hair loss and mastectomy products](#)
- [Lymphedema after breast cancer treatment](#)
- [Exercises after breast cancer](#)

“A diagnosis of breast cancer affects the woman and those who care about her,” adds Dr. Ades. “By providing resources like those available at [cancer.org](#), she will benefit by having stronger support. We have a tremendous responsibility to provide women with reliable, helpful information, resources, and tools that will not only help them through their breast cancer experience but also, as a result, save more lives from breast cancer.”

Have you, a friend or loved one used [cancer.org](#)? Were the tools useful in terms of helping to manage cancer treatments, recovery or to find support? Share your experience with us.

We look forward to sharing more information on ACS and other organizations working to empower patients in our follow-up post next week. Stay tuned.

To read this post on RWHC Blog, [click here](#).