

Psychological Needs of Cancer Patients

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Plan for the session

- The psychological needs of cancer patients – your role in making a psychological difference
- Trickier interactions – and possible solutions
- Common patient difficulties - referral onwards and resources

Psychological needs of cancer patients (Salander 1996)

Protection



Hope



Psychological needs of cancer patients (Salander)

4 'cognitive manoeuvres' – the sources of protection and hope

- The body
- Cognitive schema
- Handling of information
- Helpful relations

What is that you do to enable a patient to trust you and feel safe?

Evidence from communications literature (Burkitt Wright et al 2004):

- **Expertise**



What is that you do to enable a patient to trust you and feel safe?

Evidence from communications literature (Burkitt Wright et al 2004):

- Expertise
- **Conveying respect**



What is that you do to enable a patient to trust you and feel safe?

Evidence from communications literature (Burkitt Wright et al 2004):

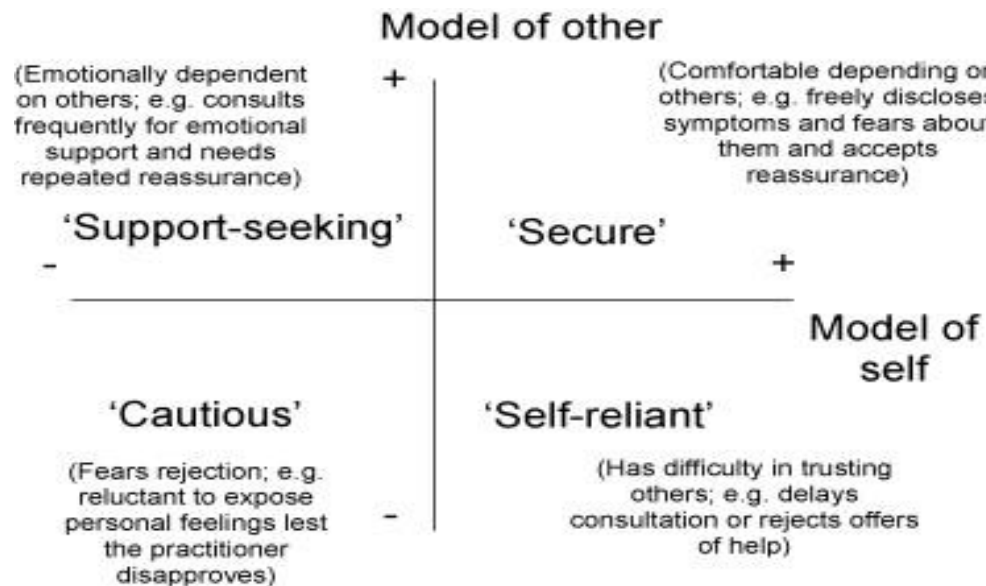
- Expertise
- Conveying respect

- Having an
individual
relationship

Respecting everyone
Embracing change
Recognising success
Working together
Our hospitals.



Trickier interactions – using an attachment model



- Martin Boscastle is a 54 year old patient who is complaining of pain. He was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer twelve months ago; he had neoadjuvant chemotherapy and followed by oesophagectomy with curative intent. The hospital treatment summary indicates some post-surgical complications which led to a three week stay on ITU. The pain is in the area where he had surgery, he describes the pain as always there but much worse when he tries to do anything. He said he had wanted to return to work by now (as a tv cameraman). The upper GI team have reviewed him recently and seem to think his physical recovery – including wound healing - is on track.
- His answers are brief and he's not very forthcoming. He has been a rare attender at the surgery, although he has type 2 diabetes and had a heart attack 5 years ago. You last saw him when he presented with the swallowing difficulties that you referred on for investigation, which led to the cancer diagnosis.

Jennifer Wadebridge is a 62 year old patient who is complaining of breathlessness and says she is worried that cancer has spread. She has been successfully treated for thyroid cancer with radioiodine treatment, some six months ago and remains on active follow up. The team have no concerns and blood tests indicate that her thyroxine levels are stable. This is the third time in six weeks that she has come to the surgery – presenting with different symptoms. Previously she has complained of chest pains and of a lump in her throat. She has been reassured by your examination and knowing that these are nothing to worry about. But she says when the breathlessness happens, she can't stop worrying about it until she's seen a doctor who can check if there's a problem.

Most common (psychological) concerns reported by cancer patients

Anxiety 12.8%

Fatigue 12.8%

Pain 7.7%

Sleep 7.4%

Anger, frustration, guilt 6.5%

Resources for all – Supportive Care Directory, Well Aware
website

Tiered psychological support

Level 2 (for mild-moderate difficulties)

- Macmillan HOPE course **07920 833641**
- NHS resources <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/reduce-stress.aspx>
- Apps – The Stress and Anxiety Companion
<https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/stress-anxiety-companion/>
- Mindfulness – Group for cancer patients at The Portland Centre
- Books – Facing The Storm by Dr Ray Owen

Tiered psychological support

Level 3 (for moderate-more complex difficulties)

- Counselling – specific for cancer patients – Bristol: Penny Brohn Cancer Care, The Harbour, BANES – We Hear You (but all are charities and will see patients from anywhere)

Level 4 (for complex and treatment specific problems)

- Hospital based psychologists in UHB, NBT, RUH, GRH

Most common (psychological) concerns reported by cancer patients

For older people - Getting around 7.7%

For younger people – Money and housing 11.5%, Personal appearance 5.7%

References

Burkitt-Wright, E., Holcombe, C., & Salmon, P. (2004) Doctors' communication of trust, care and respect in breast cancer: qualitative study. *BMJ*, doi:10.1136/bmj.38046.771308.7C

Salander, P., Bergenheim, T., & Henriksson, R. (1996) The creation of protection and hope in patients with malignant brain tumours. *Social Science Medicine*, 42 (7), 985-996.