

21 Questions to Ask Your Oncologist

Diagnosis:

1. What cancer do I have?
2. How many patients have you treated with this type of cancer?
3. Because the stage of my cancer affects the options I have for treatment, what is my cancer's stage? What does that stage mean? How does this affect my treatment options?
4. What other tests do I need to have to confirm my diagnosis and to know if it has spread to any other parts of my body? (e.g., MRI, CT, PET, bone scan, etc.)
5. I want a comprehensive genomic sequencing (or a "full panel") test of my cancer (not limiting the testing to genes that have approved treatments). What do we need to do to obtain this?
6. How much does genomic sequencing (full panel) cost? How long before I get my results?
7. Will my cancer respond to immunotherapy? Can I have the testing necessary to determine this (e.g., Tumor Mutational Burden, Microsatellite Instability, Lymphocyte Infiltration, PD-L1 Expression, etc.)

Treatment:

8. What is your recommended treatment strategy?
9. What is the goal of this treatment strategy? Cure, prolong life, or manage symptoms and side effects of the cancer?
 - a. What is the 5-year survival rate for the cancer treatment you are recommending?
10. How effective is the treatment you are suggesting based on the identified drivers of my cancer?
11. How can I learn more about the treatment you are proposing?
12. What risks are there for your recommended treatment strategy?
13. What are the short-term and long-term side effects of your recommended treatment(s)?
14. How would this treatment affect my daily activities – work, physical, driving, sleeping, etc.?

15. What do I need to do to prepare for, and during, my treatment – exercise, diet, etc.? May I speak to someone from your Integrative/Complementary Medicine Center to discuss helpful options/guidelines?
16. What tests will you order to know if the treatment is working? When will that take place?
17. If I have questions during my treatment, whom do I call?
18. What side effects should I look out for and when should I call you if I am experiencing those side effects?
19. Can you put me in contact with someone you've treated with this treatment plan?
20. What cancer center/academic research center is doing the most research on my type of cancer? Can you refer me to this cancer/research center for a second opinion?
21. Should that cancer/research center offer a targeted treatment plan or clinical trial that you don't offer, would you be willing to collaborate with them for follow-up care?

Other considerations:

Fertility preservation for me or my child that will undergo treatment.

Resources for patients (navigation services, financial, survivorship, integrative/alterative medicines, emotional support, etc.)

How should I share my hopes and expectations with my family?

Who is my point of contact? How do I contact them?

Name: _____ Title: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____