

DCCRP (DUKE COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER) has partnered with Pathfinders, a national organization, to advance an innovative and promising model of comprehensive psychosocial care for cancer patients. Cancer patients must navigate the challenging, confusing, and often lonely path from diagnosis to treatment to resolution. The Pathfinders program is designed to address the mind, body and spiritual needs of each individual patient. Patients are matched with a Pathfinder, a trained professional with an advanced degree in social work, family counseling or therapy. These Pathfinders serve as advocates for patients within the Duke University Medical System, providing unbiased guidance on:

- Complementary medicine

- Self-care

- Mind-body techniques

- End-of-life planning

- Spiritual connectivity

With the help of their Pathfinder, patients become knowledgeable about the available resources at Duke and in their home community which are important to their recovery. Pathfinders are integral members of the patient's cancer treatment team, joining with the oncologist, nurses, and others to ensure that every patient receives the highest quality medical and nursing care, and that his or her emotional, family, and spiritual needs are met. At the conclusion of their cancer treatment, patients are informed and skilled to cope with future challenges. Moreover, their families are prepared to support their loved one's personal recovery and transition to survivorship.

<http://www.pathfindersforcancer.org/>

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Ongoing research supports the idea that present day standard-of-care for cancer is failing patients in terms of their psychosocial needs and may, in fact, be damaging them in regards to their long-term emotional well-being.

Pathfinders' goal is to bridge this gap by working alongside oncologists and nurses in the day-to-day clinical setting to integrate psychosocial support with standard treatment.

You may not think of yourself as a caregiver. You may think that you are just caring for someone you love and it is just something natural. Caregiving is a term that has come of use more during the past 10-15 years. It refers to anyone who takes care of a family member, relative, spouse or friend who can no longer manage everyday tasks alone.

At certain times in our lives many of us are in the position of being a caregiver. For some of us, it may simply be caring for a parent or a loved one. Sometimes we become caregivers gradually. We help someone just a few times a month, but as the person needs more help, we get more and more involved. Whether you are a spouse, an adult, a child, relative, friend or volunteer, caregiving is becoming a fact of life for many of us.

Other times we become caregivers suddenly, when a sudden illness or event (e.g., a stroke, accident) make it impossible for an older adult to function without a significant amount of assistance.

On other occasions, we may become caregivers for a limited time while the person recuperates from an acute illness, surgery, or chronic illness.

While giving care, it is normal to put your own feelings and needs aside, however, putting your needs aside for a long time is not good for your health. You need to take care of yourself too! If you don't, you may not be able to take care of another.

About 82% of caregivers are female

61% have been providing care for less than 6 months

An estimate 15% of American workers are involved in caregiving

About 6 in 10 caregivers work full-time

About 1/3 of working caregivers have one or more children still living at home

About 8 in 10 caregivers provide some form of assistance 7 days a week by providing transportation, housework, shopping and administering medicine

Half of all primary caregivers receive no outside help and only 10 to 20% of family caregivers use agency services

36% reported caregiving took more than 40 hours per week

Relieving Your Stress

The Benefits of Caregiver Support Systems

Evidence shows that community based education and support for caregivers may help relieve the stress associated with providing care for a loved one with cancer. Importantly, caregivers who participated in one or more avenues of help reported significant improvement in the amount in which they felt informed and better able to provide care.