



## touchPANEL DISCUSSION

# Managing the needs of patients with cancer during COVID-19: A practical guide for cancer nurses

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An expert panel discussion  
recorded in July 2020

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# Expert panel



**Chair: Dr Andreas Charalambous**  
EONS President; Associate Professor  
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Limassol, Cyprus; Adjunct Professor,  
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**Johan De Munter**  
EONS President Elect; Assistant  
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Head Nurse, Oncology and Transplants  
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# Agenda

## **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer care delivery in Europe**

*Presentation:* Andreas Charalambous

*Panel discussion:* Johan De Munter and Eugenia Trigoso Arjona, moderated by Andreas Charalambous

## **How patients and their families respond to having cancer during a major pandemic**

*Presentation:* Andreas Charalambous

*Panel discussion:* Johan De Munter and Eugenia Trigoso Arjona, moderated by Andreas Charalambous

## **Practical measures to support patients and their families during the pandemic**

*Presentation:* Andreas Charalambous

*Panel discussion:* Johan De Munter and Eugenia Trigoso Arjona, moderated by Andreas Charalambous

# Impact of COVID-19 on delivery of cancer care

- The COVID-19 outbreak is impacting several aspects of the management of patients with cancer<sup>1</sup>
- Protection of patients with cancer and health caregivers remains a high priority<sup>1</sup>

Oncology teams are adopting new ways of working to **minimize risk to patients and staff** at the same time as optimizing cancer treatment and care<sup>2</sup>

An impact on the overall mortality of patients with cancer may result from:<sup>1</sup>

- Acute COVID-19 infection
- Remote effects related to the breakdown of healthcare and the economic crisis

# Identification of patients with cancer at high risk for infection with COVID-19

- Certain patients with cancer are more vulnerable
  - People who have had **bone marrow or stem cell transplants** in the last 6 months, or who are still **taking immunosuppressive drugs**
  - People with some types of **blood or lymphatic system cancer** which damage the immune system, even if they have not needed treatment (e.g. chronic leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)

Specific risk groups are patients with cancer who have an impaired immune system such as:

- Leukocytopenia
- Low immunoglobulin levels
- Long-lasting immunosuppression (steroids, antibodies)

# Psychosocial impact of having cancer during the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is a worrying time for patients with cancer

- They face worries about the risk of infection and uncertainties about the impact of the pandemic on their cancer care
- Information relating to COVID-19 is continually evolving and approaches may differ between countries



Changes to cancer care may be necessary to minimize the risk of infection

- Face-to-face appointments may be replaced with telephone or video consultations
- Surgery or treatments may be adapted, interrupted or delayed

# Considering patients' psychological health during cancer care

During the uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic, consideration of patients' psychosocial and mental health is crucial

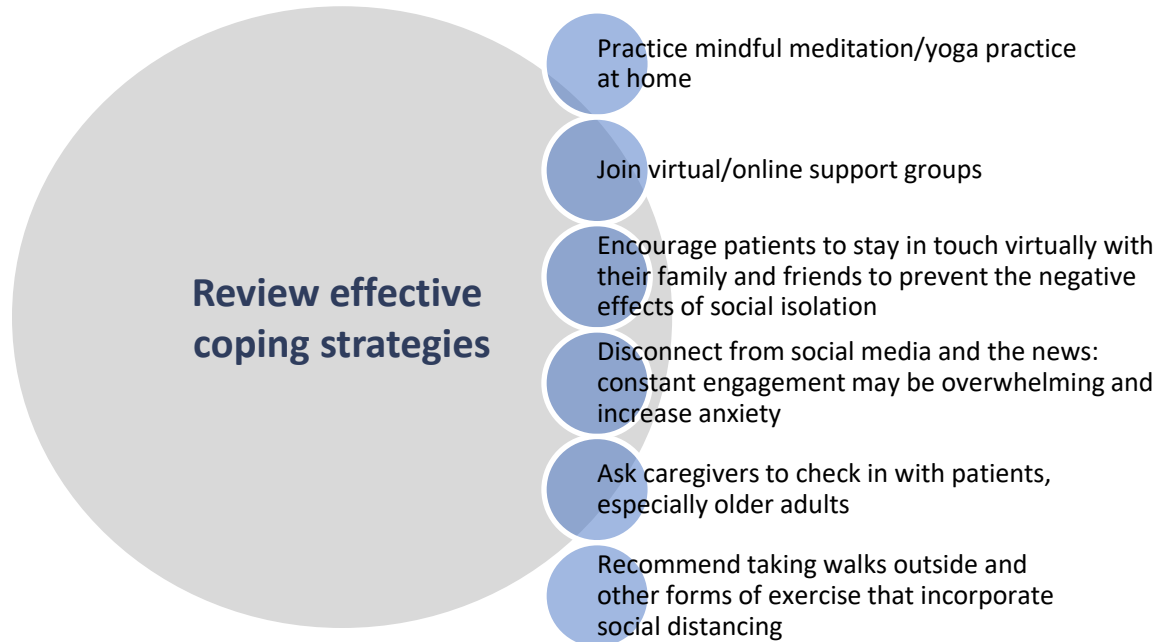
Nurses can help patients with cancer acclimate to a changing environment, process large amounts of information, and have their psychosocial needs met

- Therapeutic communication to ease concerns and anxiety
- Reinforce the continuing need to minimize infection risk
- Help patients and caregivers understand the reasons for treatment decisions
- Reassure patients that they will be treated and seen on a case-by-case basis



# Psychosocial strategies and self-care

Nurses can help patients and caregivers manage fear and uncertainty



# Ways of working to minimize infection risk to patients and staff

Transmission of **coronaviruses** from person-to-person is thought to mostly occur via the droplets generated when people sneeze and cough

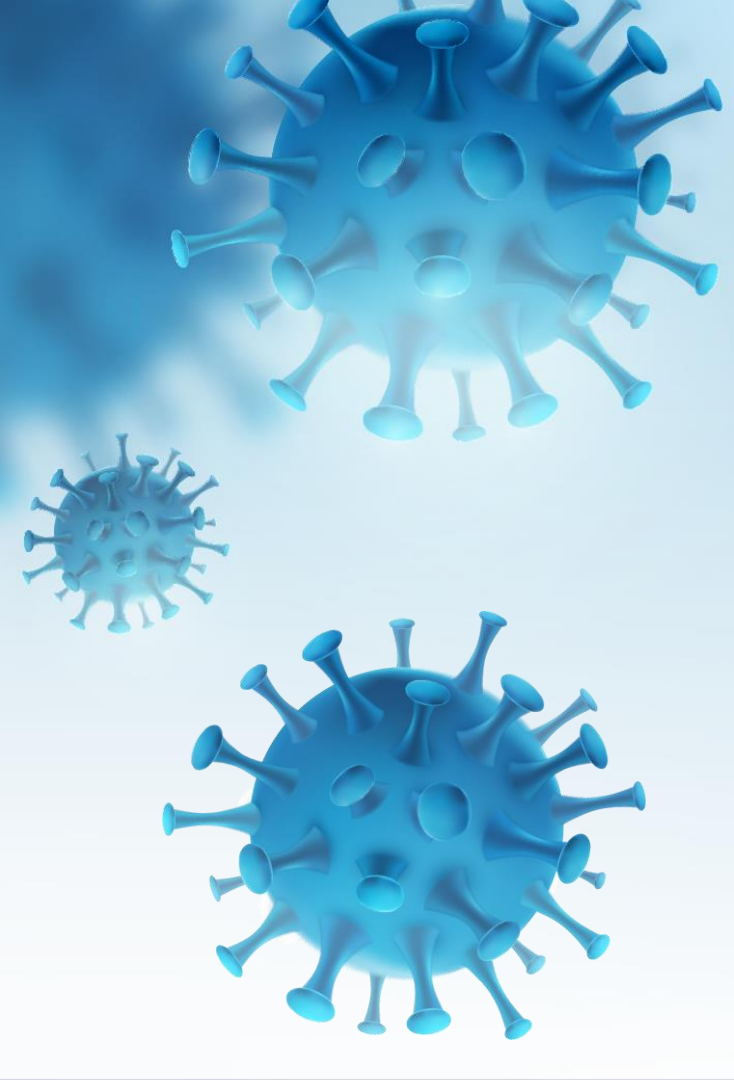


## Prevention measures in hospitals and health centres

- ✓ Non-essential appointments cancelled or conducted over the phone
- ✓ Patients attend essential appointments alone
- ✓ Patients asked not to travel by public transport to appointments
- ✓ Protective screens and barriers in place at reception
- ✓ Waiting areas closed – patients wait outside and notified by text message when appointment starts
- ✓ Separate medical teams to care for patients with COVID-19 and other patients (i.e., those with cancer)
- ✓ Cancer care relocated away from general hospital to specialist cancer centre
- ✓ Restriction of visitors

## Preventive strategies for avoiding COVID-19





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this on-demand event**

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