

Psychosocial Oncology at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre

Facing a serious illness such as cancer is very distressing. At the Princess Margaret, help is available for patients and family members having difficulty coping with their illness or treatment. Staff in the Division of Psychosocial Oncology have expertise in providing practical and psychological care and assistance for cancer related distress. This multidisciplinary program is focused on the social and psychological aspects of cancer.

The program includes staff in the disciplines of social work, psychiatry, and psychology. It provides outpatient and inpatient services to patients with cancer and their families. Research is being conducted on such issues as quality of life, self-concept, death and dying, cognitive effects of cancer and its treatment, and psychotherapeutic interventions in patients with cancer.

- The Department of Supportive Care is made up of three divisions – Psychosocial Oncology, Palliative Care, and Cancer Rehabilitation and Survivorship
- Psychosocial Oncology is an integrated, multidisciplinary team of clinicians that work together to meet the practical, emotional and psychological needs of patients and families.
- We are connected to the wider network of psychosocial oncology services both within UHN (spiritual care) and external to UHN (e.g. Wellspring, Gilda's Club)

What does the Psychosocial Oncology Service Provide?

- 1) Care for patients who have emotional distress affecting cancer care
- 2) A Caregiver Clinic to meet the needs of family caregivers of patients
- 3) Assistance with accessing practical support such as income support programs
- 4) Managing Cancer and Living Meaningfully (CALM) psychotherapy for patients with advanced cancer as early as possible in the course of their disease
- 5) Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) groups for cancer related distress
- 6) Music and art therapy (for inpatients only)
- 7) Assistance with navigating the cancer system and patient advocacy
- 8) Support and education for oncology teams in managing cancer care complicated by psychosocial distress and needs

Areas to Consider when Making a Referral

- The **psychosocial oncology clinic referral criteria** are:
 1. The patient must be a Princess Margaret patient
 2. Patient must be within 3 years of treatment
 3. Reason for referral must be related to the cancer diagnosis

- Does this patient want specialized psychosocial care at this time? If not, are there other ways we can assist you in helping them?
- If distress is not cancer-related or the patient is more than 3 years post-treatment, we can help suggest mental health resources in the community
- Are the patient's psychosocial needs already being met within another division of the Department of Supportive Care? (i.e. Palliative Care or Cancer Rehabilitation and Survivorship)
- Does this patient already have external mental health supports that can meet their needs?

Urgent Psychiatry Consultation

When there is a request for urgent referral, such a request and the reasons for its urgency need to come directly from a physician familiar with the patient's clinical situation. This ensures that there has been appropriate screening and, more importantly, that a physician responsible for the patient is aware of the level of their patient's distress. The attending physician's involvement will be ensured without delaying the consultation.

Who to Refer for Urgent Psychiatry Consultation:

Urgent psychiatry consultation should be considered if the following concerns/issues are identified:

1. Suicidal risk
2. Threat to others
3. Question of certification
4. Ability to consent to treatment or to refuse treatment
5. Altered or unusual behaviour (suspected delirium)
6. Psychosis
7. Distress interfering with ability to engage in cancer treatment

How to Refer

Same Day Referral

If your patient needs immediate psychosocial care, please call **416-946-4501 ext. 4525 (16-4525)**

If in doubt about urgency, don't hesitate to call and speak to the psychiatrist on call for advice

Standard Referral

Complete the Psychosocial Oncology Referral Form available on the UHN intranet under "Forms" and Fax it to **416-946-2047**

After-Hours Referral

Referrals received after hours (weekdays between 5 p.m. and 9 a.m., weekends or holidays) will be responded to the next business day

To access urgent psychiatry consultation after hours/on weekends or holidays, call locating (16-3155) and page the psychiatrist on call for UHN