

Questions to Ask

Understanding what questions to ask will aid in your ability to learn about your disease and allow you to make informed decisions about your treatment. It is our hope that these questions will assist you in this process.

Diagnostic Questions

1. What is the specific name of my diagnosis?
2. What is the specific name of my cancer/what type of tumor is it?
3. Where specifically is my cancer?
4. Has my cancer spread (metastasized) to other organs or tissues?
5. How large are the cancerous legions? (Is the tumor 3 cm in diameter or smaller, which may indicate a longer median survival)
6. Where did the primary cancer originate from?
7. What stage is my cancer in?
8. Is there lymph node involvement?
9. What are the characteristics of my cancer? Is this a cancer that moves quickly to other parts of the body or does it move slowly?
10. What further diagnostic tests will I need? Get the specific names of these tests.

11. How long will the diagnostic tests take, before a decision about surgery is made?

12. Can I go anywhere else to get the diagnostic tests done more quickly?

13. Do I need a biopsy to confirm this diagnosis? If so what are the risks?

14. Is this diagnosis 100% accurate?

Doctor/Hospitals

1. Get a second opinion! Where can you get a referral for a second opinion?

2. Where was this Doctor trained and who did they study under? Can you see their CV?

3. Have you treated patients with Pancreatic Cancer before?

4. How many Whipple Procedures have you done in total?

5. How many Whipple Procedures do you do a month?

6. How successful have you been in treating patients with pancreatic cancer?

7. Have you participated in clinical trials involving pancreatic cancer treatments? If so what were these clinical trials?

8. Would you consider yourself a doctor who responds aggressively to this particular type of cancer?

9. What is your success in treating pancreatic cancer patients with Chemotherapy and Radiation?

10. Is this a Doctor that you feel comfortable with?

11. Does this Doctor take an interest in your care and not look irritated with your questions? Does the Doctor appear invested in your care?

12. How many Whipple Procedures does the Hospital do in a year? (high volume hospitals are hospitals who perform more than 16 Whipple Procedures a year)

Treatment Questions

1. What are my treatment options? Ask for ALL treatment options that are available for this specific cancer. Write down all options so that you can refer to them later.

2. What are the pros and cons of each treatment option? What are the side effects of each of these treatments?

3. What are the risks to the treatments suggested? This includes either surgery or drug treatment.

4. What is the treatment that you recommend based on my test results and why?

5. Are you aware of any other treatments available at another hospital or with another physician?

6. Who will be in charge of my care specifically?

7. Where can I find the CV on the Doctor who will be in charge of treating me?
8. Where can I go to find out more about clinical trials available to me?
9. Where can I find information on alternative forms of treatment?
10. What are the medical establishments that specialize in treating this specific cancer?
11. If I decide against treatment what can I expect to happen?
12. What side effects can I expect from this treatment?
13. Will the treatment be on an in-patient or outpatient basis?
14. What type of expenses can I expect for medications?
15. Will there be other health care professionals involved in my care such as nutritionists, physiotherapists etc.

Educational Resources

1. What organizations are available for me to contact that deal specifically with this type of cancer?
2. What literature would you recommend for me to read about my cancer and where can I find it?
3. What facilities are involved in the research of this particular cancer?

Life Expectations

1. What will my life look like while I go through treatment?
2. Will there be physical limitations?
3. Will there be lifestyle changes?
4. Will there be dietary changes?
5. Will I be able to work?

Resources

- * Canadian Cancer Society
- * John Hopkins Pancreas Cancer Web
- * National Cancer Institute of Canada