



*A Cancer Information Specialist speaks with a patient about the organization's resources.*

# CARE IS JUST A CALL AWAY

While many are familiar with the research and fundraising side of the American Cancer Society, few are aware of the full scope of services available to cancer patients and their loved ones. The American Cancer Society makes these services simple to obtain – one easy call to the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 can put a patient and their caregiver in touch with the multitude of services the organization offers.

“We often hear patients say, ‘Oh, I wish I knew about these services earlier!’” said Karen Lowry, manager of the American Cancer Society’s Patient Resource Center. “We want people to know how easy it is to call the number and instantly get

connected to the many services they might need.”

When an individual calls the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345, they’ll be connected to a live Cancer Information Specialist. These specialists, who staff the phone lines 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, are specifically trained to listen to and identify the needs of cancer patients and their caregivers, then match them with services or resources to meet their needs.

“We really listen to where the patient is in the process,” Karen said. “Did they just get diagnosed and need educational materials? Are they in the middle of treatment and looking for a ride to their

appointments? We make sure to manage all requests through to completion. No one will be left to navigate a cancer experience alone when they reach out to us.”

One of the more popular services is the Personal Health Manager kit. This toolkit is designed to help patients stay organized as they go through their treatment. The American Cancer Society also offers many additional educational opportunities like the I Can Cope® series. The educational series, held both in-person and online (available 24/7), covers topics as varied as pain management, finance, health insurance and stress relief.

Road to Recovery® is also an in-demand service that can be obtained with one easy phone call to 1-800-227-2345. This program provides free transportation for a patient to and from cancer-related appointments. The American Cancer Society offers this free transportation program because many cancer patients, for all kinds of reasons, aren’t able to find consistent or dependable transportation to their treatments.

“Some patients don’t have a car, can’t afford the gas, or have friends and family that live far away and can’t help out,” Karen said. “Road to Recovery matches each patient with a volunteer driver in their area that comes to their house, takes them to their appointments, and gets them back safely. It’s convenient and totally free.”

Road to Recovery isn’t just for patients who are lacking transportation options. “Occasionally a caregiver may need a break from driving their loved one to and from treatments, or maybe there’s a scheduling issue and they just can’t make it one day. Road to Recovery can also act as a substitute driver for a patient that may otherwise have reliable transportation.”

A similarly titled program, Reach to Recovery®, pairs cancer patients with dedicated volunteers for support and information about breast cancer. In this program, newly diagnosed breast cancer patients are matched with a trained breast cancer survivor. This informal mentoring program allows the cancer patient to talk to someone who can understand what he or she is going through. Patients can ask questions, share their fears, express their feelings, receive tips from a cancer survivor on how to cope through the hard times, or just vent to a person who understands.

“Patients often find it easier to relate to a stranger who has been through the same process, rather than their own family. It gives them the hope that they too can survive this,” says Karen. “It also helps to combat the most painful side effects of a diagnosis – isolation and fear.”

Many other programs also allow cancer patients and survivors to connect with each another. The Cancer Survivors Network®, an online social community, allows patients around the country to have a forum to discuss cancer-related topics. The site is monitored to ensure that all information and topics on the Cancer Survivors Network are medically accurate.

Look Good...Feel Better®, one of the American Cancer Society more popular programs among women, allows female cancer patients to connect through appearance tools and tips – not to mention a healthy dose of pampering.

“Women who battle with cancer fight more than just the disease,” Karen said. “Many women feel a loss of identity from the side effects of cancer treatments, such as hair loss or skin issues. Look Good...Feel Better gives the women a chance to feel like they do “normally” again.”

Look Good...Feel Better is run by volunteer facilitators who are licensed cosmetologists familiar with the appearance-related issues that a female cancer patient may face. In each session,

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these cosmetologists provide women with hair, makeup and skincare tips, including showing options for dealing with hair loss, such as how to wrap a bandana or scarf, wear a wig, or use accessories manage their side effects: like hair loss or thinning. Each woman leaves the session with a free goodie bag of makeup, donated by major manufacturers, to help maintain her new look.

“The women love it – it’s like a big makeover party! Sometimes they’re so impressed with their mini-makeovers that they all leave the session and go out together to show off their new looks,” said Karen. “The atmosphere and camaraderie gives the women fuel to tackle cancer. It helps them feel normal again.”

Yet American Cancer Society programming doesn’t end there. Cancer Information Specialists, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, ensure that no request goes unanswered, no matter how difficult the challenge may be.

One staff member tells the story of a woman who called in about her father, who was newly diagnosed with cancer.

“She and her father always rode bikes together, but her father no longer had the balance to ride a normal bike. She called our 800 number and asked if the American Cancer Society knew where to find an adult tricycle for him to ride,” the specialist recalled. “She felt it would help raise his spirits if he could get out and enjoy cycling again. After a lot of searching, we found one! We were all thrilled her father would be able to enjoy the experience of biking again.”

Another specialist recalls the time a couple called the American Cancer Society after being stranded on the side of the road.

“The husband needed to receive a very specialized kind of treatment, and they were driving from their home state of Michigan to Florida for the treatment,” the specialist recalled. “While driving through Indiana, they got four flat tires. They didn’t have the money to pay for the repairs, and they weren’t physically able to do it themselves. We put the request out to our local volunteers, and a staff member’s husband, a mechanic, heard about the couple’s problem. He drove out to them and fixed their RV for free.”

The couple, grateful and relieved, was able to continue their journey to treatment in Florida.

“Even though we didn’t have a program to repair a patient’s car, we were able to find a solution quickly through our networks,” explained Karen. “We have more than 70,000 resources available for patients – whatever their needs might be, no matter how big or small, we always try to help.”

She continued, “Even if a person is just lonely or scared and needs to talk, we’re here. We are dedicated to serving the needs of cancer patients. Our entire structure revolves around serving them.” ■