

Oncology Social Workers Leading the Way:

A Psychoeducational Approach in Preparing Breast Cancer Patient's Transition from Patient to Survivor Kristy Case, LMSW, OSW-C

TRANSITION DURING BREAST CANCER

TREATMENT CREATES A MIXTURE OF EMOTIONS FOR MANY PATIENTS.

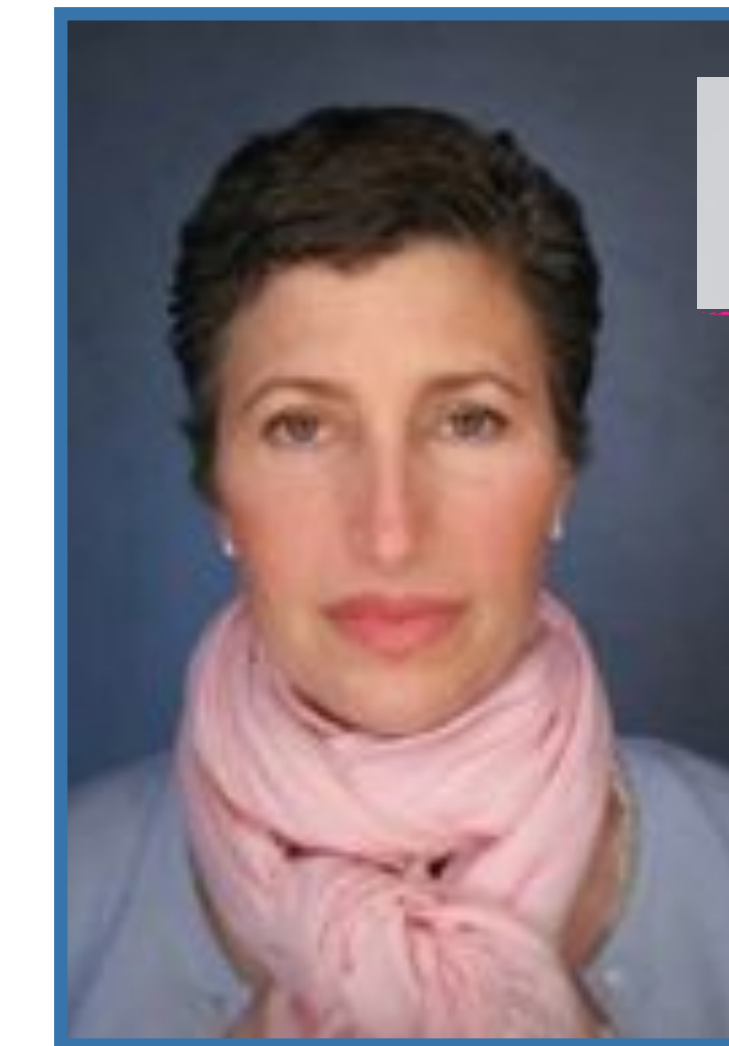
Confronting the gateway to the completion of treatment, patients are met with unique challenges and sentiments regarding their experience and impending future. For many breast cancer patients the life cycle of treatment will present a rollercoaster of emotions. Upon nearing the end of a treatment plan, oftentimes patients feel trepidation, apprehension, sorrow, bliss, achievement and honor. This area of approaching the end of one's treatment regimen is an important area that is not commonly identified as complex, however many patients experience increasing distress and unease moving towards the finality of breast cancer treatment. This area will be identified as completion of at least half of the recommended chemotherapy and/or radiation treatment. This multifaceted piece of a treatment plan warrants closer investigation and creative intervention.

The author will, in poster presentation format, implement an innovative psychoeducational guide that will enhance a breast cancer patient's preparedness to complete treatment. This guide will educate and inform breast cancer patients to better prepare them in creating a smoother transition from patient to survivor in a multitude of areas. Emphasis will be placed on managing occupational changes, lifestyle alterations, economic burden, oncologic ramifications and emotional sustainability. Social workers can give an identity and validation to an area often overlooked. Having a cancer diagnosis changes someone as an individual in countless ways; for many, life will forever be altered. Given the abundant challenges breast cancer patients encounter, providing support and education before the end of treatment allows social workers to present tools to assist patients in crafting their entryway to the future. As leaders in oncology social work, we have the ability to improve the lives of our patients. With this vision of a psychoeducational guide, social workers can continue to foster and bring understanding to the challenges of coping with cancer. This guide is a model to be replicated for all cancer patients with minor alternations for their cancer type.

Abstract Summary

PREPARING AND SUPPORTING BREAST CANCER PATIENTS THROUGHOUT THE CONTINUUM OF CANCER TREATMENT IS ESSENTIAL.

Helping cancer patients cope with the impending completion of treatment is an area within a treatment plan that needs more awareness. Those who are newly diagnosed or who are post-treatment survivors are informed of what to expect during these phases, however the phase previous to completing treatment requires action. A cancer patient who is nearing the end of treatment still needs support through their transition. We can provide support in this area by intervening with a psychoeducational guide. By having this guide, social workers can provide the awareness, education and support needed to arm breast cancer patients with what to expect and how to prepare for the completion of their breast cancer treatment. By doing so, cancer patients will be better able to cope with the transition from treatment to post-treatment, patient to survivor.



EMPLOYMENT

*Will I need a workplace accommodation?
Should I change jobs?
Can I go back to work?*



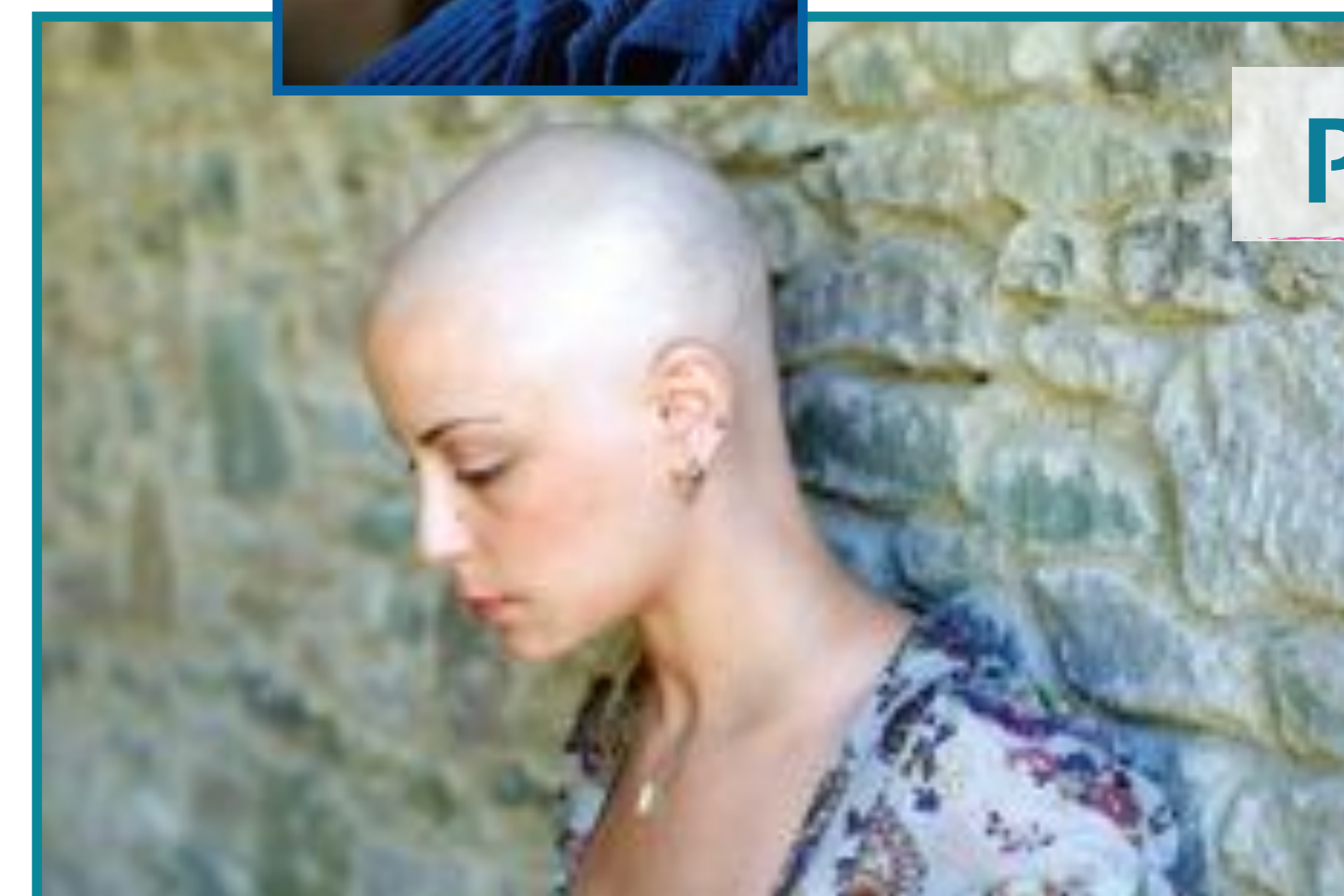
LIFESTYLE

*What will my sexual relationship be like?
What should I eat and how much should I exercise?
Can I have (more) children, do I want (more) children?*



FINANCES

*How will I pay my medical bills?
Am I eligible for disability benefits?
Can I afford my medication?*



POST TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS

*How long does chemo-brain and neuropathy last?
When will my hair grow back?
When will I physically feel like myself again?*



EMOTIONAL IMPACT

*I am happy and scared to finish treatment, now what?
I am petrified my cancer will come back.
How do I adjust to life after breast cancer?*

How CancerCare Oncology Social Workers Help:

- Counseling
- Support Groups
- Connect® Education Workshops
- Publications
- Financial Help
- Practical Guidance
- Wigs, Bras/Prostheses

As Oncology Social Workers We Can Recommend:

- Books
- Yoga
- Massage
- Acupuncture
- Lymphedema Therapy
- Aromatherapy
- Home Delivered Meals
- Home Care Services
- Relaxation CD's
- Career Coaches
- Registered Dieticians
- Physical Therapy