



The Special Challenge of Helping Teenage Cancer Patients

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Cancer treatment and management is no easy task for anyone, but it can be much more challenging for teenage patients, according to [New York Times' Roni Rabin](#). To begin with, detection of the disease is difficult for patients in this age group, because teenagers do not usually share with adults about their physical changes. Neither are the teenage patients inclined to seek help, as they are at a stage where independence is a landmark of growth. This often results in late detection of the disease and subsequently necessitates aggressive treatments and leads to lingering side effects.

Another difficulty with managing cancer for teenagers and young adults is the ongoing debate over whether these patients should receive treatment in pediatric hospitals or with adults in regular

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hospitals. The truth is there is no good fit for teenage patients: the types of cancers teenagers develop are often very different from those adults have. Also, the psychosocial support teenage patients need is not available from either the pediatric settings, where most of the population is comprised of toddlers and children, or regular hospitals, whose adult patients have decidedly different concerns in their struggles with cancer.

In light of the difficulty of treating and managing teenagers' cancer, new cancer treatment programs are being tailored specifically for teenagers and young adults. The Knight Cancer Institute in Oregon, for example, instituted a program where pediatric and adult oncologists are both available for consultation.

Parents should report to their child's pediatrician any physical or behavioral changes they observe in teenagers. Symptoms as subtle as prolonged fatigue can be a warning sign for serious disease, like lymphoblastic leukemia.

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