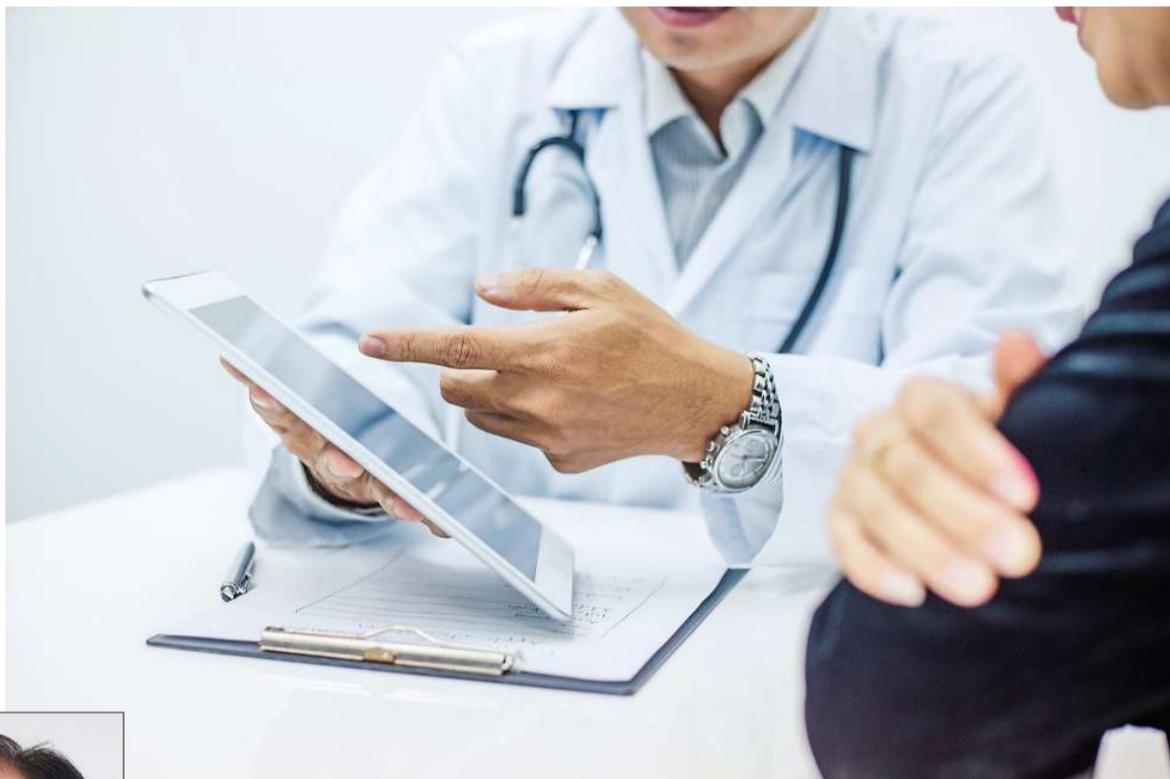


# PATIENT-CENTRED CARE

Patients are at the heart of any healthcare institution, which needs to provide them with quality care and respect.



Doctors should ensure that their patients are well-informed about their condition and treatment options.

According to Dr Yap, if patients turn down treatment, doctors have the responsibility to find out why and address their concerns.

healthcare providers in the decision-making process.

He also notes that the patient's family should not be left out of the patient's treatment and recovery journey.

This is as they spend the most time with the patient and may know vital health details about the patient that may be overlooked by doctors and nurses.

Therefore, their thoughts must be taken into consideration.

## Prioritising patient care

Healthcare institutions are

expected to prioritise maintaining a satisfactory level of patient care.

Patients need to feel safe and that they can trust the quality of care at the hospital.

To do so, Dr Yap recommends that hospitals carry out regular audits and request feedback from patients to determine any shortfalls in all departments and address them in a timely manner.

He says that communication is key to ensuring that every patient receives the best care.

"In my experience, most patients' dissatisfaction stems from a breakdown in communication.

## Asking for help

As a patient, there may be times when you need additional clarification or care assistance.

In such instances, speaking to the relevant person is a general rule of thumb.

When it comes to a specific medical condition, Subang Jaya Medical Centre consultant clinical oncologist Dr Yap Beng Khiong advises patients to not feel intimidated or hesitate to speak to the doctor or nurse on duty.

As they are at the frontline of patient care, they should be able to better understand and attend to your concerns.

On all other matters, he says, "Patients should reach out to hospitals' customer care services, as they have standard operating procedures and specialist officers to investigate, try to solve the issue and keep the patient updated."

Dr Yap adds that healthcare providers are responsible for empowering patients with information.

"When patients are informed regarding their health, they will be able to manage their illness and understand their treatments and any side effects better."

"Hence, communication skills are crucial for every healthcare provider and patients should be encouraged to speak up when in need of help or clarification."

This article is courtesy of Subang Jaya Medical Centre. For more information, call 03-5639 1212.

THE delivery of patient-centred care can be divided into two components: healthcare institutions and healthcare providers.

Both are equally important in ensuring patients' safety and well-being.

Subang Jaya Medical Centre consultant clinical oncologist Dr Yap Beng Khiong says that healthcare institutions are responsible for providing services to treat patients with specific illnesses.

"For example, when treating cancer patients, hospitals should be able to provide up-to-date facilities, from diagnostic imaging (PET-CT, MRI and CT scans) to the latest radiotherapy delivery technology, targeted therapy, chemotherapy and immunotherapy, which are personalised treatments based on the type and characteristics of each cancer."

He adds that hospitals must maintain a certain quality of treatment that meets international standards of care.

For example, adherence to the standards set by global leader in healthcare accreditation Joint Commission International, may facilitate improvements towards safe and quality healthcare.

## Engaging with each other

Healthcare providers, including doctors, nurses and allied healthcare professionals, are always the first line of contact with patients and hold different responsibilities for a patient's well-being.

Dr Yap notes that patients come from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, which is especially pertinent in a multi-racial and multicultural country such as Malaysia.

Hospital staff must respect their patients' background, along with their dignity and wishes.

"When we talk to patients about procedures and treatment, we must always obtain the patient's consent.



"If they decide to turn down treatment, we have the responsibility to find out why and address their concerns," he says.

There are different methods to treat different conditions.

Hence, Dr Yap stresses the need for patients to be engaged with

# COMBINING TREATMENTS FOR BETTER OUTCOME

By Dr IVAN SHEW YEE SIANG

CANCER is a complex disease with many interconnected risk factors that lead to the formation of mutations in human genes that control cell growth and death.

These gene mutations can be inherited or acquired through external factors such as environmental exposure and diet.

It is therefore vital to note that DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) damage exists in our cells all the time.

In most cases, this damage is identified and repaired by cells.

If it cannot be repaired, the cell will receive a signal to self-destruct via a process called apoptosis.

The dysfunction of DNA repair and apoptosis mechanisms may cause accumulation of gene mutations, which may eventually lead to uncontrolled cell growth, and subsequently, cancer development.

When cancer progresses, the abnormal growth of the cells may not be confined to just the primary site.

These cells can spread to other areas of the body via the bloodstream or lymphatic system through a process known as metastasis.

Advanced stage cancer accounts for the majority of cancer deaths as



Chemotherapy is among the options used to treat cancer, which also include surgery, radiation therapy, hormonal therapy, immunotherapy and targeted therapy. — Wikimedia Commons

it is much more difficult to treat.

Early cancer diagnosis generally increases the chance for successful treatment and increased patient survival rates.

Additionally, it reduces the cost of treatment, compared with the cost at more advanced stages.

Cancer cells used to be normal cells whose growth mechanisms have lost the ability to self-regulate.

Therefore, our immune systems may find it difficult to differentiate between cancerous cells and nor-

mal cells.

Similarly, it is also challenging for scientists to develop a drug that specifically targets cancer cells, without harming normal cells.

Drug resistance in cancer treatment is also a clinical hurdle.

## Treatment strategy

In terms of cancer treatment, there is seldom a single solution for this complicated and rebellious disease.



Dr Shew notes that it is challenging to develop cancer drugs that do not harm normal cells.

Cancer treatment is strategised based on the various types of cancers and stages.

Doctors usually strategise and administer one type of therapy, followed by another, for cancer treatment.

The treatment options include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormonal therapy, immunotherapy and targeted therapy.

The rationale of using multidisciplinary care and treatment combinations is to enhance treatment efficacy and potentially reduce

drug resistance.

If the disease is incurable, especially in advanced stages, modern therapy can usually prolong a patient's life expectancy.

Nutritional intervention may be complementarily adopted by cancer patients to reduce malnutrition following treatment, hence improving their quality of life.

However, nutritional intervention alone is usually not enough to stop the growth of cancer cells, as cancer is not purely a nutrition-related disease.

Therefore, dietary adjustment is unable to correct the lethal mutation that occurs in cancer cells.

Consult a doctor as early as possible when you notice something unusual about your body or if any cancer symptoms arise.

Regular health check-ups can help in early cancer diagnosis as well.

Cancer treatment shouldn't be delayed after diagnosis, to ensure that the likelihood of successful treatments and survival rates are higher.

Dr Ivan Shew Yee Siang is a consultant clinical oncologist. This article is courtesy of ParkCity Medical Centre. For more information, call 03-5639 1212.