



News release

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Better communication and coordinated care vital for cancer patients and their carers

New research from PwC on the experiences of cancer care by patients, caregivers and clinicians shows there is a gap between patients' expectations of their care and what they receive suggesting a new approach is required.

The research, *From surviving to thriving: Cancer's next challenge*, based on a survey of 1,456 cancer patients, caregivers and clinicians, found that information about diagnosis, treatment options and recommendations is not always communicated clearly. Further, choice of doctor and hospital are very important to patients and their caregivers, but many found their preferences were not always considered. Almost half of patients considered their care not to be very coordinated.

Dr Tim Wilson, partner at PwC, said:

"One of the great achievements of medicine is the improvement in survival of people with cancer. But people diagnosed with cancer, once the initial shock is absorbed, want to be able to make choices, receive personalised and coordinated care and have more control over what happens to them. They want to live as 'normal' a life as possible – to 'thrive'.

"Our results show that people with cancer want care that is coordinated, flexible and personalised. They want a health system that involves them in the decision-making on their treatment and care, taking into consideration their personal outcome preferences. But according to our research, their needs and desires do not always match their experience. In essence, health systems have to move their focus on cancer from surviving to thriving."

Justin McLean is a partner at PwC Australia. He was diagnosed with cancer in 2013 and co-authored the report. Justin said:

"We need to let go of the word 'survivor'. If that's a value proposition then it's a lousy one because not everyone will survive cancer. But you can still have a good quality of life and be enabled to continue doing the things that you enjoy. Things that enable you to flourish. Things that enable you to thrive. We need a change in mind-set."

Key findings:

Communication is critical – it is often done well but more could be done:

- 88% of patients say it is extremely important to have information about their diagnosis presented clearly in a way they could understand, but only 69% say they did.
- 81% of patients think it's extremely important to have all cancer treatment options and recommendations presented clearly, but only 65% feel they did.
- 74% of clinicians feel their responsibility includes setting patients' expectations about life while going through treatment, 21% do not feel accountable beyond diagnosis and treatment.
- 84% of patients and 74% of carers felt it was extremely important to have the opportunity to ask questions about their treatment; 71% and 55% respectively had that experience.

Being part of the decisions about care is important:

- 77% of those surveyed said they want to be involved in choosing a doctor, while 83% want to have a say in the decision of where they will receive treatment.
- 71% of patients expressed it 'extremely important' to have their personal preferences considered. Only 60% feel their preferences were considered.
- 71% of patients said they wanted a proactive healthcare team, 53% said their expectations were met.
- 59% of clinicians said they feel a sense of responsibility to serve as a resource to answer questions, but patients and caregivers feel this is not made clear.

Coordinating care is important, but care can often appear fragmented:

- 47% patients and 34% of caregivers said their care was not very coordinated.
- 35% patients and 49% of caregivers said their active healthcare team was not synchronised.

Digital can pave the way for better cancer care...

Digital could present solutions to many of the problems identified in the report. It could:

- provide information in a range of forms so people with cancer, their families, friends and carers can access it at all times
- help guide them to make smart and informed decisions about treatment choices that will deliver the best outcome for them
- connect users to people with similar conditions nearby, or around the world
- enable them to make contact with a specialist at a time and in a place that works for them
- in the form of health wearables, digital can also play a part in monitoring patients' conditions, either as a means of keeping as well as possible, or to provide feedback to clinical teams
- provide an integrated record, for people with cancer and their caregivers to share, wherever or whenever.

Dr Tim Wilson, partner at PwC, said:

“The adoption of digital technologies has been slow in healthcare compared to other sectors, making it likely that a new digital entrant, working with a cancer centre, will very likely disrupt the way cancer care is provided, providing better outcomes.”



Notes to Editors

About the report

PwC wanted to explore the current experience of people going through cancer and identify what could be changed to enable them to thrive. A series of hypotheses were devised to understand what happens from cancer diagnosis through treatment to recovery. To test these hypotheses, PwC commissioned a research survey in three key countries: Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States – three countries that are representative of cancer challenges faced by the developed world. The survey was conducted among cancer patients, caregivers (relatives) and clinicians. The methodology consisted of 30-minute online qualitative surveys, conducted between November 2014 and February 2015. The sample consisted of 1,456 responses. For a copy of the report, please visit www.pwc.com/thrivewithcancer.

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