

THE NAVIGATOR

Your Cancer Care Resource



In 2019 YourChoice Manatee partnered with Beacon Advocates to provide its members who are living with cancer access to specialized oncology nurses and social workers at no extra cost to you.

Beacon is an independent patient advocacy company that provides concierge-level guidance and advocacy services designed to assist you in navigating the healthcare system and your cancer care because we all know it is not easy and intuitive.

The staff at Beacon Advocates understands your health plan benefits and understands the complexities of cancer care and the healthcare system. If you or a family member experience a cancer diagnosis, we encourage you to take advantage of this specialized benefit to cancer care insiders who are trusted professional advocates to help support you through your cancer journey.

To supplement Beacon's support, we are providing you with their quarterly newsletter designed to offer educational resources, caregiving tips, and more.

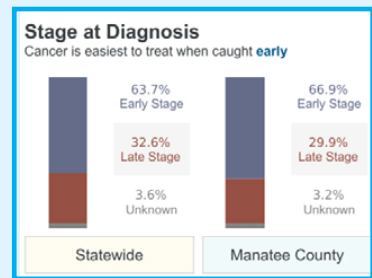
Have suggestions? Ideas for future topics? Beacon would love to hear from you!

Email feedback to info@beaconadvocates.com

Cancer in the Time of COVID-19

The 'Big C' of 2020 is undoubtedly COVID-19, but cancer doesn't stop just because a new medical issue exists. Since the pandemic began, there were many elective medical procedures delayed in order to prioritize urgent needs and to reduce COVID-19 spread in healthcare settings. One consequence of this has been a substantial decline in cancer screening.

The impact from these delayed screenings has created an unfortunate ripple effect, with some cancers being detected in later stages. This stands to make a difference in treatment options and survival rates. Early detection is key. This truism is highlighted in the observed data for Manatee County as seen over a four-year period (2013-2017).



While 67% of newly diagnosed individuals with breast cancer were diagnosed in an early stage, 30% were diagnosed in an advanced stage. This means the cancer had spread to other organs, making it more difficult to treat. Screening and early detection can impact care and, likely, survival.

If you or your loved one have received a new cancer diagnosis, please don't hesitate to reach out to Beacon Advocates. Our knowledgeable and seasoned oncology team will work as part of your team to make sure you are the center of your care.



IN THIS ISSUE

Screening/Detection

- Screening During COVID-19
- Breast Cancer Awareness

Caregiver's Corner

- The Emotional Toll of Caregiving
- One YourChoice caregiver's experience with Beacon

Living with Cancer

- COVID-19 and Cancer

CANCER IS NOT QUARANTINED CHECK YOUR BREASTS!



Let's be aware and honor those impacted by cancer. Click [here](#) for more info.



Cancer Screening During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Thankfully, as stay-at-home orders are relaxed or lifted, health care facilities have been scheduling routine cancer screenings, tests, and exams again. These cancer screenings are regularly scheduled tests to check for cancer in people with no symptoms. If it's time for your routine cancer screening, talk with your doctor about the best health approach for you.

If you had an appointment for screening that was postponed or canceled, talk with your healthcare team about rescheduling. Your provider can discuss balancing the risks and benefits of being screened now or postponing.

Screening can help prevent colorectal and cervical cancers by detecting precancerous lesions that can then be removed. It can also detect some cancers early; in this case, treatment is more apt to be successful. Screening is known to reduce deaths from cancers of the breast, colon, rectum, cervix, and lung (among current or former heavy smokers). These screening tests are different from tests your doctor might order if you have symptoms that could stem from cancer.

Note: If you experience signs or symptoms that are not normal, reach out to your provider as soon as possible. You will need exams and/or tests for further evaluation.

Screening recommendations are generalized to include large groups of people, but flexibility may exist. For example: Many women have a cervical cancer screening every year. However, no organization recommends cervical cancer screening with a Pap test any more often than every 3 years, and if an HPV test is used, no more often than every 5 years. If you have had normal test results in the past, opting for a cervical cancer screening at this time is not urgent unless you experience symptoms such as:

- Vaginal bleeding after intercourse, between periods or after menopause
- Watery, bloody vaginal discharge that may be heavy and have a foul odor
- Pelvic pain or pain during intercourse

Several options for colorectal cancer screening exist for people who are at average risk. For example, a stool DNA test, such as Cologuard, can be done safely at home.

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If the stool test result is positive, you may need a colonoscopy.

Reach out to your provider if you are experiencing the following signs or symptoms:

- Persistent change in bowel habits, including diarrhea or constipation or a change in the consistency of your stool
- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool
- Persistent abdominal discomfort, such as cramps, gas, or pain
- A feeling that the bowel doesn't empty completely
- Weakness or fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss



Breast Cancer Awareness

Did You Know: About 12% of American women will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime.

Advancements continue to be made in the treatment of breast cancer, but there's no substitute for early detection. Be diligent about scheduling and attending screenings.

YourChoice Health Plan Wellness Exam and Screenings encourages an annual clinical breast exam with a mammogram for women age 40-49 to be conducted every 2 years; that timeframe should move to an annual basis by age 50+.

Experiencing any of these symptoms? Don't wait for your next screening appointment - call your doctor right away.

- Lump in the breast
- Bloody discharge from nipple
- Changes in the shape or texture of the nipple or breast

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommendations for healthcare facilities to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Screening centers should be available to answer questions from patients via phone or web portal before and after their screening procedures:

Check out CDC info here.





The Emotional Toll of Caregiving

Caring for someone with cancer can be physically and emotionally draining. Physically, you may experience fatigue, changes in appetite or problems sleeping. Emotionally, you may feel sad, anxious, guilty, angry, frustrated or helpless.

Too often, caregivers put their own needs aside to focus on their loved one's needs. This may lead to caregiver burnout, which can express itself as:

- Illness
- Increased anxiety
- Depression
- Irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Resentment

It's common for caregivers to become stressed trying to wade through all the cancer research and treatments available. It can be difficult to take control of someone else's calendar and to schedule what can seem an endless array of appointments.

Beacon Advocates does all of the above, leaving a caregiver to

focus on supporting the patient emotionally.

Caregiver tips include:

- Accept that good and bad days are inevitable. Try to remember the good days when a bad one does occur.
- Try to focus on what you can do instead of dwelling on what is not possible. No, you can't singlehandedly cure the patient's cancer – but you can be there for them in whatever capacity they need.
- Join a group and ask for help. Whether that means you just need someone to talk to or you need actual assistance with chores or financial advice, consider reaching out to an organization such as The National Alliance for Caregiving or the American Cancer Society.

Lastly, don't ignore signs of burnout. If you feel depressed, withdrawn, anxious or irritable, take a step back and find help for your caregiver duties. Look for more tips [HERE](#).

My Experience with Beacon Advocates (as told by the caregiver)

My husband went into the hospital in the middle of the night with pain. During his workup, we received a diagnosis no one ever wants to hear: It's cancer. We were initially shocked, but I have a background in healthcare, so I immediately went into "provider" mode. It was my coping mechanism and helped keep me going during the next few months. I scheduled an appointment with Moffitt Cancer Center, and the next week while we waited for the appointment I received a phone call from Alison, a nurse advocate from Manatee YourChoice.

She told me that our insurance covers 4 months of a service for a company called "Beacon Advocates" and would I be interested in getting them involved? I said sure. At this point, being so early on in our journey, I was willing and wanting to take all the assistance I could get.

Shortly thereafter, Lea Ann Biafora, CEO of Beacon Advocates, reached out to me and we set up a zoom intake meeting (due to COVID-19). She came alongside me and walked with me during this journey. Since neither my husband or myself had been down the cancer road before, Lea Ann was there to give guidance and direction. She was my sounding board when I had questions or just needed to

vent, she was MY advocate when I couldn't get a response from other medical personnel and would make phone calls on my (and my husband's) behalf and in general helped gather and organize medical records.

Lea Ann was there for me all the time. I would text Lea Ann at 5 in the morning and she would respond quickly. She not only made sure my husband was getting the care that he needed, but she checked in on me, asking how I was doing as the caregiver and offering support and encouragement as needed.



I am so thankful our insurance company has partnered with Beacon Advocates to assist those who are given the dreaded cancer diagnosis. It is such a blessing knowing you have a medically educated and experienced person in your corner helping and fighting for you and your loved one. Things have settled down with my husband currently and we do not currently need Beacon Advocates' services. Even though our time has ended, Lea Ann has reached out to me wanting to know we are doing okay. We are not just a number to Beacon Advocates, we are family.

I know that when we need her again, Lea Ann will be there for us, ready to help any way she can.

COVID-19 and Cancer

According to the American Cancer Society, nearly 80% of cancer patients report delays in care due to COVID-19.

For those who need that care to prolong survival and manage pain, these delays are significant. This is a message for all who are living with cancer during these pandemic times: Yes, there is a pandemic. Here's how to live with cancer in the age of COVID-19.

The best way to keep others from getting sick is to ensure that you yourself are not exposed to the virus. To do so, please keep the following tips in mind:

1. Reduce your exposure: Wash your hands properly and often. This needs to be done for at least 20 seconds using soap and water. If you do not have access to soap and water, be sure to use hand sanitizer that contains 60% alcohol.

- Avoid touching your face, nose, and eyes, especially if you encounter “high-touch” surfaces in public areas, such as elevator buttons, door handles, and handrails.
- Work to avoid crowds, and practice physical distancing (a minimum of six feet).

2. Consider telemedicine: Call your provider to see if this is an option for non-urgent situations. Your provider can often prescribe medicine and send those prescriptions to be filled at a location most convenient for you – many pharmacies are providing home delivery services.

Mail order is an option for some medications. Of course, if there is an emergency, call your provider right away.

3. Food Delivery: If possible, have a family or friends pick up groceries for you, or enroll in a service that delivers groceries to your doorstep.

4. Exercise: Physical activity is an instant mood booster and stress reducer that also helps to improve your circulation, digestion, immune system, and sleep.

5. Make time for yourself: **Sleep**—Make sleep and rest a priority, and always aim for quality over quantity. **Laughter**—Laughter has been shown to increase endorphins, soothe tension, and provide instant stress relief. FaceTime a friend or check out some comedies on TV. **Breathing**—Meditation and breathing lessen anxiety, reduce stress, and enhance focus. Take 3-5 slow breaths and tell yourself to “slow down” or “stay calm.” You can also count your breaths up to 10 and repeat as often as necessary. This is a highly effective, all-natural, anti-anxiety exercise. **Appreciation**—Take time every day to think about what you are grateful for. This may also be a great time to start a gratitude journal if you haven't done so already

6. Maintain Connection:

It's important to stay connected with others during your treatment. There are many ways to maintain your social connections. In this age of social distancing, consider communicating virtually.



7. Join an Online Support Group:

You may also find it helpful to connect with others who are going through similar experiences and are able to empathize with you in ways that even your close and well-meaning family members and friends cannot.

Getting a flu vaccine this year is important for people with cancer, as they may be at a higher risk for more severe forms of the flu and COVID-19.



At Beacon, our singular mission is to guide you through the entire experience to ensure you receive the best cancer care available. Each engagement is tailored to meet your unique needs. As ‘insiders’ who know how to navigate the healthcare system, Beacon Advocates combines principles of case management with clinical oncology expertise to identify, review, and stay abreast of the latest science to guide and advocate for you.

Among the ways Beacon Advocates can assist you:

- Eliminate barriers to the best care
- Navigate the complexities of cancer care within the healthcare maze
- Provide peace of mind
- Understand insurance benefits and reduce access barriers
- Understand disease and treatment options
- Develop a list of questions to discuss with your medical team
- Compare planned treatments to scientific (evidence-based) clinical treatment guidelines
- Research clinical treatment and clinical trials
- Guide through changes in treatment regimens
- Review and organize medical records and bills
- Coordinate all or parts of cancer care



For more information, call 855-490-8777 today, or visit BeaconAdvocates.com