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A Flipchart for Cancer Education

Acknowledgements:
The American Cancer Society, Inc. (ACS) (cancer.org) has engaged Hesperian Health Guides (hesperian.org) to lead the development of this flipchart for health workers to communicate basic cancer information to newly-diagnosed cancer patients and their caregivers. This flipchart is based on content which was previously adapted from original ACS materials by Johns Hopkins Center for Communications Programs in collaboration with ACS partners in East Africa.[1] Some content is also based on qualitative research conducted in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia. Limited content was adapted from Hesperian Health Guides,[2] MacMillan Cancer Support, and the U.S. National Cancer Institute. A special thank you to the following individuals from Hesperian Health Guides for text (Paula Worby), graphic design (Rosemary Jason), and illustrations (Rodney Kawaayi).

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This flipchart has a companion booklet for patients and caregivers.

Instructions for Download and Printing: To download a print-ready copy of this flipchart, or its companion booklet, visit cancer.org/globalpatientsupport.

If you have any questions, please reach out to globalpatientsupport@cancer.org.

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1 East African partners include: Ministry of Health of Kenya, Kenyan Network of Cancer Organizations, Aga Khan Hospital, Kenyatta National Hospital, Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, Ministry of Health of Uganda, Uganda Cancer Institute, Uganda Cancer Society, Ugandan cancer organizations coordinated by the Uganda Cancer Society, Federal Ministry of Health of Ethiopia, and representatives from Ethiopian cancer organizations.

2 Including text adapted from *New Where There Is No Doctor* and illustrations by various artists appearing in other Hesperian Health Guides materials.

Contents

Notes on using this flipchart 1
About this resource 1
Tips for counseling people with cancer 2
Doing the best you can 3

Learning about cancer 5
Let's talk about cancer 5
What is cancer? 7
Types of cancer 9
Tumors are lumps that may be cancer 11
What causes cancer? 13
You cannot give cancer to others 15
How does the doctor know I have cancer? 17
What is a biopsy? 19
Stages of cancer 21
Can my cancer be cured? 23

Cancer treatments and side effects 25
Common cancer treatments 25
Surgery to remove cancer 27
Chemo (Chemotherapy) to destroy cancer cells 29
Radiotherapy (radiation) to destroy cancer cells 31
Asking questions about treatment 33
Side effects from cancer treatments 35
Managing side effects 37

Living with cancer 39
Feelings about having cancer 39
Talk about cancer with your family 41
Keep your body strong to fight cancer 43
You can get through cancer and cancer treatment 45
Where to find more information and support 47

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"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another."

– Charles Dickens

This flipchart is dedicated to the health workers who care for and support people with cancer and strive to provide accurate and easy-to-understand information about cancer.

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This flipchart was made to help health workers explain cancer and its treatment to someone who has been told they have cancer, perhaps accompanied by family or friends. It can also be used for public talks or other situations where you need to explain about cancer and cancer treatment.

This flipchart complements the booklet *Finding Your Way Through Cancer*. If you have the booklet, note that most pages of this flipchart show which booklet pages cover the same topics.

The topics and main points on each page were chosen because they were found to be useful by other programs. You may have your own ways of sharing this information, and your program may have other topics to add.

You can decide how to best use this flipchart depending on your program and the person you are speaking with. You might skip certain pages or choose to use them in a different order.

Your program may have additional materials to share, such as materials on nutrition that include foods common to your community and culture. People will also want to learn what resources are available through your program or in your area to help with treatment costs, a place to stay, contacting social workers, support groups, or other local assistance. Prepare handouts in advance and decide if you will discuss them as you go through the topics in the flipchart or once you reach the last page.

Some of the illustrations include words or captions. It may be helpful to point to those words and say them as you are discussing the topic so everyone understands what they mean.

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TIPS FOR COUNSELING PEOPLE WITH CANCER

Whether you are new to counseling or have experience supporting people when they find out they have cancer, you are an important part of their treatment. They will depend on your ability to explain information and answer questions about their new and worrisome situation. Your knowledge, patience, and compassion will make a great difference for them.

Health workers have shared these ideas about how to best counsel people:

- Plan for enough time and to talk in a place where you will not be interrupted. Show the person they have your full attention and you are not in a hurry.
- Be on the same level as them: sit down if they are sitting. Look at them directly when you speak, even if you sometimes need to refer to your notes or their health file.
- Listen with more than your ears. Watch their expressions and body language to see if they are understanding what you are saying or if they have questions.
- Ask the person what they know about their diagnosis. Say: “Bring me up to date on your illness and what the doctors have told you.” This can help you have a better idea of their understanding and concerns.
- Speak gently but honestly about their diagnosis. You may have to say: “I’m afraid it looks rather serious.” Be patient as they react to any new information you are sharing.
- Be honest about possible side effects or complications. Reassure them that others have been in their situation and it helps to know what to expect. Emphasize that each person’s experience is unique, and let them know who they can contact if they develop problems during treatment.
- Use ordinary words that most people understand. Explain any medical words you must use or that they might have heard. Pause often to say, “Let’s talk about any questions you have so far.”
- Encourage patients and family members to ask questions and then respond to their concerns. They might be shy or scared to raise questions so you can ask: “What are your main concerns at the moment?” or “Tell me what you are thinking or worrying about.”

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DOING THE BEST YOU CAN

Communication takes time. It can be challenging to devote enough time to counseling when you have many patients to see and many demands on your time. People will appreciate the time you give them and the kindness you show will always be remembered.

Greeting each patient respectfully, showing your interest in them, sharing enough information to address the needs of their current situation, answering their questions, and offering any advice that may help will all contribute to making the person feel more at ease, worry less, and continue to follow through with their treatment.

Counseling for people with cancer can mean the difference between helplessness and hope.

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Information about cancer can be hard to take in.
We are here to help.

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LET'S TALK ABOUT CANCER

Today we will be talking about cancer.

- If you have been told you have cancer, this can be hard information to hear.
- I will do my best to explain some helpful information today and provide other materials you can take home.
- You can ask me about anything that isn't clear or any other questions you have: I will do my best to answer or suggest who else might have the information you need.

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HEALTHY CELLS

The body makes new cells as the body needs them, for example, to heal a scratch or wound and then grow new skin.

CANCER CELLS

Cancer cells grow too fast. They crowd out the healthy cells and start to spread in the body.

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WHAT IS CANCER?

- Cancer is a disease which causes cells in the body to grow out of control. This makes it hard for the body to work the way it should.
- The human body is made of millions of tiny cells. Normal cells grow and divide to make new cells as the body needs them. When cells get old and die, new cells take their place.
- Cancer cells grow and divide until there are too many. These cancer cells crowd out normal cells and cause problems. Cancer cells can also move to other parts of the body and cause problems there. Let's look at these pictures together.

Review Copy

This goes with page 3 in the booklet

Places in the body where cancer often happens

Review Copy

TYPES OF CANCER

- Cancer cells can start in any part of the body. They can also move to other parts of the body and grow there.
- Cancers are named for where they start. If cancer starts in the breast, then it is called breast cancer. If it spreads to the lymph system or to the bones, it is still called breast cancer.
- Some cancers grow quickly and spread. Others grow more slowly.
- Cancer often starts in the breast, lungs, throat, prostate, liver, intestines, cervix, uterus, or skin.

Review Copy

This goes with page 4 in the booklet

Common places for tumors are the underarm, neck, and genital area

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TUMORS ARE LUMPS THAT MAY BE CANCER

- A tumor is a lump or a swelling.
- Most cancers form tumors, but not all lumps or tumors are cancer.
- Lumps that are not cancer are called benign. Lumps that are cancer are called malignant.
- Cancer of the blood and some other cancers do not form tumors.
- Whether or not there is a tumor, there are cancer treatments to help you fight the cancer and to make you feel better.

Review Copy

This goes with page 5 in the booklet

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WHAT CAUSES CANCER?

- Cancer can affect anyone, in any country. Cancer happens more when people are older but young people also get cancer.
- Cancer has many causes. It may be difficult to know exactly what caused a person's cancer.
- Some situations or illnesses make getting cancer more likely. Examples include smoke in the air, smoking tobacco, and chemicals that pollute where we live or work.
- Cancer is not caused by magic spells, the evil eye, or any supernatural force. Cancer is not a punishment for having done something wrong.
- There are many rumors about cancer that people hear. Let's talk about any stories you have heard about why people get cancer or questions you have.

This goes with pages 6-7 in the booklet

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YOU CANNOT GIVE CANCER TO OTHERS

- Many people worry that they will get cancer from being around someone who has it. But cancer is not contagious. It does not spread from person to person.
- It is completely safe for family and friends to visit, eat, and live with a person who has cancer.
- A few cancers can run in families, such as breast cancer, but most cancers do not. Cancer does not pass from parent to child during birth.

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Let's discuss any questions you have about this.

This goes with page 8 in the booklet

ULTRASOUND

SCAN

Review Copy

DRAWING BLOOD FOR A BLOOD TEST

HOW DOES THE DOCTOR KNOW I HAVE CANCER?

You or a health worker may have noticed something unusual about your health.

- When a person notices a lump, has unexplained pain, loses weight unexpectedly, or has sores on the skin that do not go away, doctors may look for cancer in your body using tests.
- When a health worker thinks you might have cancer, they will want to make sure. They may ask you to have a test. Common tests are: a biopsy, x-ray, ultrasound, scan, or blood test. You may need more than one test.
- We can talk more about these different tests. The tests do not harm you or make cancer worse; having the tests helps doctors know more about your cancer and which treatments could work best.

Review Copy

This goes with page 9 in the booklet

For a biopsy, a doctor removes a small piece of tumor and examines it with a microscope.

Review Copy

WHAT IS A BIOPSY?

A diagnosis is knowing if cancer is or is not present.
A biopsy is a test that lets you know for sure.

- During a biopsy, the doctor removes a small piece of the tumor to look at its cells carefully under a microscope. Sometimes this is done with a needle; sometimes by taking out a small piece of the tumor.
- Biopsies do not cause cancer to spread to other parts of the body. In fact, getting treatment quickly once you know the results of a biopsy can prevent cancer from spreading.
- Biopsies do not leave a big wound. Because a very small piece of the tumor is removed, you heal quickly.

Review Copy

This goes with page 10 in the booklet

STAGE 1 OR 2

A lower number (stage 1 or 2) means that the cancer has not spread at all or has not spread too much.

Review Copy

STAGE 3 OR 4

A higher number (stage 3 or 4) means it has spread more.

STAGES OF CANCER

- When cancer spreads, it is called metastasis; the cancer can metastasize to affect more of the body.
- When doctors find cancer in the body, they look to see how much cancer there is and if it has spread from where it started.
- Knowing how much cancer is present will help the doctor decide what type of treatment is best, and the chances for it to be cured or controlled.
- Doctors usually use the numbers 1 to 4 to describe how much the cancer has spread.
  - A lower number (stage 1 or 2) means that the cancer has not spread very much.
  - A higher number (stage 3 or 4) means it has spread more. Stage 4 is the highest stage.
- At any stage there are usually treatments that help you feel better and help you have more time with the people you love.
- Let's talk about questions you have, especially if the health workers already know and have told you the stage of your cancer.

This goes with page 11 in the booklet

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The cancer is growing slowly in your bladder and has not yet spread. Chances of surviving this cancer are very good.

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CAN MY CANCER BE CURED?

- If you start treatment at an early stage, chances are good you will survive. Many people who have cancer do not die from it.
- Many factors affect how long a person lives after getting cancer:
  - The type of cancer and where it is in your body
  - How long the cancer has been in your body
  - If your cancer is fast-growing or slow-growing
  - Your age and what other health problems you have had
  - How well treatments for the type of cancer you have will work in your body

Health workers will explain whether they think your cancer can be treated successfully.

This is a question you can ask them, if they have not explained this clearly enough.

Review Copy

This goes with page 12 in the booklet

SURGERY

RADIOTHERAPY

CHEMO

Review Copy

COMMON CANCER TREATMENTS

- The most common treatments for cancer are surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy. A person with cancer may have any or all of these treatments.
- The kinds of treatment your doctor prescribes will depend on:
  - The type of cancer
  - The stage of the cancer
  - Your age and overall health
- The goal of the recommended treatment may be to cure the cancer, control it, or treat problems it is causing.
- If health workers have already told you which treatments you will receive, let's talk about those specifically.

This goes with pages 14-16 in the booklet

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SURGERY TO REMOVE CANCER

- Surgery is used to remove cancer. The surgeon might take out some or all of the body part the cancer affects.
- Surgery is best for cancer tumors that have not spread to other parts of the body.
- Surgery may be used to cure the cancer, keep it from getting worse, or treat problems it is causing.
- Ask the health workers to explain how surgery will help you.

Review Copy

This goes with page 14 in the booklet

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CHEMO (CHEMOTHERAPY) TO DESTROY CANCER CELLS

- Chemotherapy is also called chemo. It is medicine that kills cancer cells or slows their growth.
- Because chemo medicine travels to nearly all parts of the body, it is useful for treating cancer that has spread.
- People receive chemo in hospitals or treatment centers. Usually the medicines are given slowly through a tube into a vein in your arm. Chemo can also be given as pills, liquid, or as an injection.
- Chemotherapy may be given to cure cancer, keep it from getting worse, or treat problems the cancer is causing.
- Ask the health workers to explain how chemo will help you.

Review Copy

This goes with page 15 in the booklet

Review Copy

RADIOTHERAPY (RADIATION) TO DESTROY CANCER CELLS

- Radiotherapy is also called radiation. It kills or slows the growth of cancer cells.
- A machine sends high doses of radiation to kill cancer in a specific part of the body.
- Radiation may harm some normal cells near the cancer cells, but the normal cells can repair themselves while the cancer cells cannot.
- To receive treatment, usually the person lies on a table under the radiotherapy machine. Radiotherapy does not feel hot and is usually not painful, but your skin might get irritated.
- Radiotherapy may be used to cure cancer, or slow the growth of cancer.

Review Copy

This goes with page 15 in the booklet

How long will the treatment last and when will we know if it is working well?
NOTES
NOTES

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ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT TREATMENT

- Your health workers will give you lots of information about your cancer and your treatment plan. It can be difficult to understand and remember.
- Ask questions when you aren't sure. Health workers want you to understand your situation.
- Writing down your questions before your appointment makes them easier to remember. You probably will have new questions at each visit.

Review Copy

This goes with page 18 in the booklet

Cancer treatments bring different side effects.

Feeling extremely tired is very common.

SIDE EFFECTS FROM CANCER TREATMENTS

- Chemotherapy and radiotherapy can have side effects.
- Some side effects can be severe and others mild. Health workers will help you lessen the side effects and get through them.
- Most side effects go away after treatment ends.
- Some common side effects of radiation and chemotherapy are:
  - **feeling very tired**
  - **nausea and vomiting**
  - **sores in the mouth**
  - **loss of appetite**
  - **diarrhea**
  - **temporary hair loss**
  - **skin sores and rashes**
  - **changes in how you feel about sex**

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This goes with pages 19-24 in the booklet

You can do many things to prevent, lessen, or treat side effects

Crackers can calm nausea

Drinking through a straw helps with mouth sores

Herbal teas can feel relaxing. Ginger tea can calm nausea.

Restful sleep is healing

Massage, acupressure, and other techniques often relieve discomfort and make you feel better

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MANAGING SIDE EFFECTS

- Health workers have good ideas about how to prevent or manage many side effects. Ask for their suggestions. They can also tell you who to call if your problems seem like an emergency.
- Nutritious food, exercise, enough rest, getting help from friends and family, and getting ideas from other people getting cancer treatment can help lessen or prevent many side effects.
- There are methods—sometimes called complementary therapies—to lessen or help people get through side effects. These include: meditation, massage, acupuncture, prayer or spiritual practices, herbal teas, among others.

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This goes with pages 20-26 in the booklet

Having cancer is hard

You don't have to face it alone

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FEELINGS ABOUT HAVING CANCER

- Most everyone will have feelings such as disbelief, shock, worry, fear, and anger. Why me? or: What did I do wrong to get cancer? are common reactions for people with cancer.
- Look for activities and people that make you feel better:
  - Spend time with loved ones
  - Talk about your feelings and fears with someone you trust. There may be support groups for people with cancer where you live.
  - Continue activities that you enjoy
  - Relax with music, gentle exercise, meditation, or prayer

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This goes with page 28 in the booklet

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TALK ABOUT CANCER WITH YOUR FAMILY

- It's hard to go through cancer and even harder to do it alone. It is important to tell your loved ones and let them know how they can help.
- Hiding your cancer can make it harder to get treatment and follow your doctor's instructions.
- Many patients fear that their family or friends will reject them if they learn they have cancer. In fact, this is not usually the case.

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This goes with pages 30-31 in the booklet

Keep your body strong

Eat healthy foods

Drink plenty of water

Try gentle stretches

Everyday tasks keep you moving

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KEEP YOUR BODY STRONG TO FIGHT CANCER WITH GOOD FOOD AND ENOUGH EXERCISE

- Regular exercise and eating nutritious foods can help you feel better and stay strong.
- Every day, try to eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, foods that have protein, and grains.
- [If available:] I will share a list of common foods that are all good to eat when you have cancer.
- Ask your doctor what sorts of exercise you can do. Regular exercise can help reduce stress, nausea, tiredness, and constipation. It can also improve your appetite and your mood.
- Make sure you drink plenty of water.

This goes with pages 32-34 in the booklet

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YOU CAN GET THROUGH CANCER AND CANCER TREATMENT

- Learn as much as you can about your cancer and its treatment. This will prepare you and give you more control over what happens.
- Take care of yourself. Care for your body and mind by eating and sleeping well and doing something you enjoy every day.
- Reach out to others who understand. A cancer support group brings people together to speak and listen to each other. It helps when you can share what you are going through with people who know how you feel.
- Find what works best for you.

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This goes with page 29 in the booklet

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WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

I will now share with you information about:

- The services and programs offered at the health care facility.
- Government and non-profit organizations that help people with cancer:
  - with costs of treatment
  - with finding accommodations, food, or other support
  - support groups, counseling, or social worker services
  - other sources of support

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If providing the booklet, *Finding Your Way Through Cancer*, you can point out any pages in the booklet that will be most useful to the person, given their situation.

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