Where are we going?

- Psychological Impact of Metastatic Breast Cancer (MBC)
  - Common psychological themes
  - Rates of anxiety, depression
- Adjustment to diagnosis and treatment
  - Tools
  - Available resources
Multidisciplinary Team

- **Palliative Medicine**
- **Psycho-oncology**: psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, psychotherapists
- **Cancer Rehab**: physician, OT, PT
- **Integrative Medicine**: physician, acupuncture, massage, healing touch, yoga, Tai Chi/Qigong, art + music therapy
- **Nutrition**: Registered Dietitian, classes, individual assessment
- **Nurse Navigation**
- **Senior Oncology**
- **Survivorship**
Impact of MBC on Quality of Life

• Metastatic breast cancer affects both physical and mental health

• Quality of life negatively impacted by diagnosis and treatment of cancer
Considerable stress – diagnosis, treatment

**Psychological Impact**
- Shock
- Denial
- Loss of dreams and grief
- Fear
- Helplessness
- Worry about death, dying
- Heightened awareness of life’s brevity and search for meaning in cancer experience

**Must adjust to:**
- Symptoms of the disease
- Stress, physical impact of treatment
- Feelings of vulnerability
- Loss of Control
- Threat to self-esteem
- Financial Concerns
- Changes in family structure
- Changes in functioning
  - Independence v dependence
The Impact of Cancer—The Family

**Must adjust to:**
- Increased stress, worry, fear
- Loss of control
- Change in the nature of the relationship
- Change in family structure/roles
- Lost income

**Different issues for different relationships**
- Children of ill parents
- Spouse of ill person
Common Experiences

• Loss of Emotional Intimacy:
  • Social constraints on disclosure of cancer-related concerns exacerbate distress
    • Denial of family members and friends
    • Avoidance
    • Discomfort

(Mosher et al, 2013)
Cancer, Depression, and Anxiety

• 33 - 56% meet criteria for anxiety or depression

• Advanced disease associated with greater psychological distress

• Symptoms of anxiety and depression overlap with cancer and side effects of treatment

(Gabsch et al, 2006; Appleby, Appleby, & Rabins, 2008)
What is depression?

- Common symptoms:
  - Increased tearfulness
  - Social withdrawal
  - No longer enjoying activities
  - Poor concentration
  - Increased use of alcohol or drugs to block negative thoughts, feelings
  - Guilt with being “burden”
  - Frustration or indecisiveness
  - Fatigue
  - Poor sleep
  - Changes in appetite or significant weight loss/gain
What is anxiety?

• Common symptoms:
  • Feeling overwhelmed
  • Difficulty bringing thoughts under control
  • Difficulty concentrating
  • Muscle tension
  • Fatigue
  • Irritability
  • Restlessness
  • Panic attacks
  • Nightmares or flashbacks
Treatments for Distress, Depression, and Anxiety

- Treatment options
  - Psychotherapeutic options
    - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Mindfulness
  - Medication
  - Combination medication +psychotherapy most aggressive
Tips for Engaging in Treatment

- Be proactive
- Be direct
- Be patient
- Be prepared to follow the treatment plan
- Be persistent
Building Stress Resistance

- Personal control and responsibility
  - Changing thought patterns
- Positive health habits
- Take breaks
  - Activity Pacing
- Social support
- Relaxation
Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

- Imagery
- Body Scan
- Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Meditation
Value-Based Action

- Depression arises from loss of meaning and fulfillment, role changes
- Understanding and identifying important values
- Living consistently with values
  - Structuring day with positive activities
Summary

- Changes in mood and worry are normal
- Changes in mood and anxiety can negatively impact quality of life
- Patients should be proactive and prioritize mental health
  - There are effective treatments available
Contact

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