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Large Majority of Patients Delegate Treatment Decisions to Physicians, Cancer Support Community Study Finds

WASHINGTON – (July 31, 2015) –Data released today by the Cancer Support Community (CSC) at the World Congress of the International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS) and the American Psychosocial Oncology Society (APOS) examined the factors that are most influential when choosing a particular treatment option.

Eighty-seven percent of patients surveyed indicated that they had multiple treatment options, and when it came to the factors that influenced their decisions, 72 percent said “physician recommendation.”

“While we fully support the important relationship between the patient and the health care team, this is a finding that underscores the critical fact that patients must take an active role during the decision-making process instead of relying solely on physician opinion to drive decisions about care,” said Kim Thiboldeaux, CEO of the Cancer Support Community. “The cancer care environment today is one of increasing complexity, increasing options and decreasing time with the health care team. These factors make it even more important for patients to work with their health care team to reach a treatment decision that best meets the goals of therapy most important to the patient.”

The survey was administered to 1,816 attendees at seven nationally-run educational workshops hosted by the Cancer Support Community in 2013. Participants were allowed to choose multiple factors.

Despite frequently quoted opinions that patients’ interest in aggressive therapy is driving treatment decisions and potential health care costs, this study suggests that patients are placing significantly more trust in physician opinion than other factors. For instance, 33 percent of respondents made treatment decisions based on “the greatest chance for survival,” and 33 percent on “the most aggressive treatment.” Ten percent cited “side effects” and 8 percent said “insurance/financial reasons.”

“One of the goals of the Cancer Support Community’s work is to empower patients during the treatment decision-making process,” said Gwen Darien, executive vice president of programs and services at the Cancer Support Community. “Previous work in shared decision making

demonstrated increased satisfaction and decreased decisional regret when a comprehensive conversation and plan are a part of the process.”

Patients should work with their health care teams to employ tactics of shared decision-making, comprehensive care planning and distress screening in order to identify the unique goals of therapy and reach a plan that is best for the patient.

The full study abstract and poster can be viewed [here](#).

About the Cancer Support Community

As the largest professionally led nonprofit network of cancer support worldwide, the Cancer Support Community (CSC) is dedicated to ensuring that all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action and sustained by community. CSC achieves its mission through three areas: direct service delivery, research and advocacy. The organization includes an international network of Affiliates that offer the highest quality social and emotional support for people impacted by cancer, as well as a community of support available online and over the phone. The Research and Training Institute conducts cutting-edge psychosocial, behavioral and survivorship research. CSC furthers its focus on patient advocacy through its Cancer Policy Institute, informing public policy in Washington, D.C. and across the nation. For more information, please call the toll-free Cancer Support Helpline at 888-793-9355, or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org. *So that no one faces cancer alone*®

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