"I DON’T KNOW: How to communicate clinical trials data to elderly cancer patients"

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**Outline**
- Uncertainty about data
- What constitutes effective communication
- Preferences and health information needs of older cancer patients
- Barriers to effective communication
- Communicating risk and prognosis
- Interventions and models for effective communication

**Communicating uncertainty**
- Uncertainty may be due to lack of strength in scientific evidence
  - inadequacies of study design
  - need to extrapolate risks from one population to another
  - differences in interpretation of study outcomes
- Understanding uncertainty is a critical element of an informed decision but is rarely communicated
- Patients’ cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to uncertainty are themselves uncertain*


**What do we know about effective communication in cancer care?**
- Experts advocate a patient-centered approach to cancer communication*
- Communication must help patients:
  - Deal with uncertainty while maintaining hope
  - Understand and remember complex information
  - Understand statistics related to prognosis
  - Handle the emotional impact of a life-threatening illness
  - Build trust that will sustain a long-term clinical relationship

*NCI Monograph Patient-Centered Communication in Cancer Care

**Clinical guidelines for the psychosocial care of adults with cancer**
Australian National Cancer Control Initiative, 2003

- Offer prognostic information prior to treatment initiation but ask first if patient wants to be given this information
- Adhere to patient’s preference about what type of information to give
- Preface any prognostic estimate with its limitations
- Present information in a variety of media: words, statistics, graphs
- Summarize discussion and reassess the person’s understanding

**Unanswered questions**
- Older cancer patient’s views about degree and types of desired involvement in treatment decision-making
- Older cancer patient’s views about family involvement
- Definitions and trade-offs between quality of life and survival
- Variability of views about information, decision-making and treatment, according to levels of frailty, comorbidity, and socio-demographics