

Mayo Clinic Q & A - Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi - Cancer survivorsh...

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cancer survivorship, patients, cancer, clinics, survivorship, treatment, cancer survivors, tailor, survivorship care plan, mayo clinic, meghna, survivorship clinic, typically, care, visit, general internists, medical oncologist, oncologist, discuss, cancer centers

SPEAKERS

Dr. Halena Gazelka, DeeDee Stiepan, Narrator, Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi

D DeeDee Stiepan 00:00

Coming up on Mayo Clinic Q&A,

D Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 00:02

Cancer survivorship visits can be very beneficial for the patients. They can provide a bridge between your primary care and your oncologist and help patients sort out the post treatment journey a little bit easier.

D DeeDee Stiepan 00:14

Cancer survivorship clinics provide the services that help cancer survivors live well after cancer treatment. They help patients manage the physical and emotional changes that can be experienced after cancer treatment.

D Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 00:26

These clinics are dedicated to monitoring various side-effects of treatment, monitoring any new or recurrence of present cancer. They're also tailored towards understanding what your other medical issues are. So, it's a pretty comprehensive appointment and visit and be catered to the needs of a variety of different cancers.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 00:50

Welcome. everyone to Mayo Clinic Q&A. I'm your host Dr. Halena Gazelka. Many institutions

that provide cancer care also offer cancer survivorship clinics and care. These clinics focus on helping people with cancer manage the physical, emotional and social effects of cancer and cancer treatment, as well as improving the overall health and well-being of cancer survivors. An important step in this is developing a cancer survivorship plan. Tailored to the individual survivor, this helps the person get the most out of life after a cancer diagnosis. Joining us to discuss this today is Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi, a general internist specializing in cancer survivorship at Mayo Clinic in Florida. Thanks for being here today, Meghna.

D Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 01:40

Thank you so much, Halena.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 01:43

Just wonderful to have you here today. And now, see I've already learned something that we have general internists who specialize in cancer survivorship. What a wonderful, wonderful specialty.

D Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 01:57

Thank you so much. Yeah, so there is a great need to serve the cancer survivors. And I think general internists can play a definitive role in that. So, thank you for having me.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 02:07

Well, tell us how you define a cancer survivorship clinic. What does that mean?

D Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 02:12

So, a cancer survivorship clinic with, you know, is typically dedicated to cancer survivors. So, you know, who are people who are living with cancer, or who may be in remission, or who may be a long-term treatment as well to take care and control their cancer. And these clinics are dedicated to monitoring various side-effects of treatment, monitoring any new or recurrence of present cancer. They're also tailored towards understanding what your other medical issues are, they may be age related, they may be existent before your treatment started. So, we also kind of look at your family history and your other risk factors for other chronic medical issues. There's a pretty comprehensive appointment and a visit and we cater to the needs of a variety of different cancers. So, that's what a typical cancer survivorship clinic would be like.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 03:16

Interesting. So, tell me a little bit about what kind of specialists you would have on the care team in a clinic like this.

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Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 03:23

So, we have a variety of medical specialties assisting us in this process. Our medical oncologists typically, you know, will guide us regarding the future surveillance through what is called a survivorship care plan, which we will discuss. But there's other specialties that help us achieve the goal of a smooth, you know, roadmap towards future health. For example, a rehabilitation specialist, a cardiologist if there is cardiac risk factors involved. There's a nutritionist, there's a mental health specialist. We also utilize the help of other specialty like gastroenterology and nutrition services that may help us, you know, guide what the patient needs are and tailor it to their survivorship needs. So, typically, a cancer survivor will have a multidisciplinary team of people following them to achieve good future health and active surveillance.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 04:25

You, that sounds very organized. That sounds great. Tell us what a survivorship care plan, as you mentioned that a little bit earlier. What would be included?

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Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 04:33

So, a survivorship care plan is typically designed for the patient, and it is also sometimes utilized with their primary care physicians. It entails the details of their treatment, the details of their cancer journey, their pathology reports, what kind of treatment radiation, chemotherapy they have received. And there's also an assessment and a care plan for future of how often these patients need to have their surveillance scans, what labs to look for, what signs to look for. It also addresses some of their long term needs if they are suffering from peripheral neuropathy or chronic diarrhea post treatment. It also addresses tips, time management protocols for that. So, it's an extremely useful document both for the patient and for their primary care providers.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 05:22

Meghna, I think you mentioned earlier that some of these clinics cater to certain types, or serve patients with certain types of a cancer diagnosis. Can you tell a little bit more about that, and then at what point in cancer care would an individual be referred to the survivorship clinic?

D

Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 05:40

So, there's no ideal set point where they can be referred. I think it's a mutual discussion between their oncologist and the patient of what time would be perfect for them to sort of start enrolling in a survivorship clinic. It doesn't have to be an immediate transition. Sometimes you work with the medical oncologist and see how the patient's comfort level is transitioning to a new provider. A lot of patients choose to do that around three years or more, but there's no set definition of what time you should transition. There can be some specific cancer survivorship clinics, which could be tailoring to the particular disease type. For example, you know, you

could have a lymphoma survivorship clinic, a breast survivorship clinic, a BMT survivorship clinic. So, those are different kinds of disease specific survivorship clinics. You could also have a general survivorship clinic which caters to the needs of all cancer survivors. However, they will tailor your survivorship care plan to your particular cancer type.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 06:44

That's interesting. And how often should an individual meet with their caregivers and their providers in the cancer survivorship clinic?

D Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 06:54

Yes, so again, there is no definitive sort of timeline in terms of how often they should meet. But it also depends on the complexity of their post cancer journey. If they are in the low to moderate complexity, you know, care plan, then their survivorship frequency, the visits of their survivorship visits would be different from somebody with a higher complexity survivorship care plan. So, it all depends on your post treatment phase, and also sometimes on your pre-treatment phase, which guides the post treatment phase.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 07:34

I imagine that for some of our listeners, this is the first time that they have heard of a cancer survivorship clinic, and might wonder what would patients expect when they went to the clinic for the first time?

D Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 07:47

So, typically your first cancer survivorship evaluation visit is a discussion primarily, firstly of your cancer journey and how you were diagnosed, and the treatment that you've had. We also kind of open up the discussion about your pre-treatment health and also effects from the cancer treatment and the post treatment effects. So, we have to, you know, we would like to tailor to all those needs. We also discuss about your family history, any concerning genetic mutation that may be being passed on from generations, and patients have the option of discussing that. There is also a cardiac health risk assessment. There is also assessment of various other types of cancer screenings to look for any new primary cancers that may appear. There is also discussion about nutrition, mental health, exercise, sleep, sleep apnea, which can stay undiagnosed for many patients. So, a very comprehensive assessment is done in your very first visit. If you are above 65, your geriatric needs are also assessed in terms of fall risk and dementia risk. And those aspects are also discussed if they are applicable to a certain patient.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 09:02

As you were talking, Meghna, I thought, wow, this sounds like wonderful health care even for an individual who didn't have cancer, but what a wonderful way to blend all of those needs into one kind of one stop shopping or one source for a patient.

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Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 09:19

Yes, cancer survivorship visits can be very beneficial for the patients. They can provide a bridge between your primary care and your oncologist and help patients sought out the post treatment journey a little bit easier.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 09:31

How common are these clinics, Meghna? Are they offered at all major cancer centers or places that treat cancer?

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Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 09:39

They have become common now. Most bigger cancer centers, most bigger hospitals setups where they treat cancers do have survivorship clinics, and typically you'll be able to find something close to you. If not, you can connect virtually to a bigger cancer center for cancer survivorship care. So, telemedicine also has a very important role here.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 09:59

So, that's great. I was going to ask you what an individual could do if they were interested in this type of care but did not have it available near them.

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Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 10:08

Yes. So, you know, with the advent of virtual care, I think this can be a very instrumental role in serving the underserved areas for cancer survivorship or if patients have trouble with transportation because of physical impairment or other resources virtual care can be administered very effectively for cancer survivorship.

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Dr. Halena Gazelka 10:27

That's wonderful. Virtual care has really opened doors for a lot of individuals to receive care that they could not otherwise conveniently receive. So, thank you for sharing that. That's great. Thank you so much Meghna, for being here today. Any last words that you want to share with our listeners?

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Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 10:45

Well, I'm grateful for this opportunity to be able to share the advancements of cancer survivorship clinics and the role they can play in your post treatment phase. I would say do not be afraid to ask your oncologist or your primary care provider regarding these clinics. And if

your primary care provider is very comfortable treating your post treatment phase that can serve as a good way to pursue survivorship as well. So, we are all here to support any patient who may have these needs. And please do not hesitate to reach out to me if there are any questions.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 11:20
Thank you, Meghna.

D Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi 11:22
Thank you so much.

D Dr. Halena Gazelka 11:24
Our thanks to Mayo Clinic internist, Dr. Meghna Ailawadhi, for being here today to discuss cancer survivorship with us. I hope that you learned something. I know that I did. And we wish each of you a very wonderful day.

N Narrator 11:37
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