SOCIAL WORK IN ONCOLOGY
YOUR KEY TO BETTER HEALTH

Coping with the stress and symptoms associated with cancer and its treatment has potential impact on every facet of a person's life. Oncology social workers are specially trained professionals who support the whole person – mind, body, and spirit. This collaborative approach is essential for the provision of person- and family-centered, culturally congruent, quality care, and is **key to better health**.

Oncology social workers **promote health** and **enhance hope** by providing individualized support, education, and counseling to cancer patients and families by:

- **Completing** biopsychosocial-spiritual assessments to identify strengths and resource needs
- **Providing** evidence-informed interventions to enhance coping and well-being
- **Navigating** complex healthcare systems
- **Facilitating** support groups to aid in understanding illness
- **Leading** family meetings and advance care planning conversations
- **Coordinating** care across settings
- **Advocating** for policies that improve services
- **Addressing** social drivers of health and other barriers to care

Oncology social workers enable healthcare providers to focus on what they do best, while working to ensure that people get what is needed to manage their health. Committed to social justice, social workers **improve healthcare outcomes** by aligning treatments to patient needs and preferences which can reduce unnecessary expenditures and overtreatment, increase patient satisfaction, and minimize healthcare disparities.

Social Work in Oncology in Action:
Shylah is a 57-year-old single mother who has been juggling two part-time jobs to make ends meet. Lack of insurance has made her hesitate to seek medical care, but following several months of worsening abdominal discomfort, she has learned that she has ovarian cancer. During her initial hospitalization, she was referred to the oncology social worker who assisted Shylah in applying for medical insurance and linked her to additional resources. In collaboration with the interdisciplinary team, the social worker helped Shylah to understand her treatment options. Throughout her treatment, the social worker continued to meet with Shylah and her family as they coped with the myriad of physical, social, emotional, financial, and spiritual concerns associated with her illness. When Shylah entered a period of remission, the social worker supported her transition back to the workforce.

References:

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