

[TRACK 1: INTRODUCTION]

Narrator: Robert O'Gorman

[Mary]

When the doctor called to set up an appointment to talk about my mammogram, I did not want to talk. I told her, if it is bad news, tell my daughter.

[Joanne]

After my surgery and treatments for cancer of the uterus, I thought someone would talk to me about how this would affect my being intimate with my husband. But, no one did. They probably thought I was too old to be interested in sex. And, I was too embarrassed to ask.

[John]

I know Mary Ellen will want to remain in our house after I'm gone, and I'd like to see that that happens. So, when I heard that there are ways you can sell your life insurance policy for money, I thought that was something I should look into.

[Rita]

I thought insurance would be easy when I got to be 65 -- you simply get on Medicare and your problems would be over. So I was surprised to find out that there were more choices to be made. I knew about Medicare Part A and Part B, but I didn't know how complex it had all become.

[Jim]

Quality of life issues are very important to my wife and me. I play golf and am active in other outdoor activities, like hiking, camping, and fishing. My wife and I have also enjoyed a good sexual relationship. So, the possible side effects of treatment for prostate cancer -- impotence and incontinence -- really scare me.

[Ruth]

If I have another stroke, a bad one, my husband would have to make some hard choices if I couldn't decide for myself. I've already told him that I wouldn't want to be kept alive by machines. But, I know it would be hard for him to tell the doctors to take me off life support. That's more than I think he could take.

[Doris]

I realize I'm going to die sometime in the near future and I've made my peace with that. The problem is my three children. They don't like the idea of me just "giving up." They make me feel like I'm letting them down. My oldest son even acts like he's mad at me. The other day he told me that I should think about my grandchildren -- didn't I want to live to see them grow up? Well, I was just heartsick at this.

[Isabelle]

I'm taking so many different pills, I honestly can't keep them straight. It's hard to remember when to take them and how to take them. I can't understand the pages of instructions the pharmacist gave me. And, it's hard paying for them, too. The new nurse helped me find a way to keep better track of them all and how to take them better, too. Why didn't I get this information sooner?

[Bessie]

I've been undergoing chemotherapy for several months now. I go to see my doctor every four weeks, and it seemed that each month I was getting more and more exhausted. When I tried to talk to him about this, he suggested I get more rest. "Just take it easy," he said, "at your age, it's normal to be slowing down some." I have to tell you, I was a little offended by the casual way he said this.

[Joe]

When my cancer doctor told me there wasn't much he could do for my pain, I decided to call the pain clinic I heard about at the hospital. The receptionist said I needed a doctor's referral for insurance purposes. Well, I wasn't going to call my cancer doctor, so I thought I'd call my family doctor. She was very sympathetic and referred me with an appointment to the pain clinic the very next day.

[Many people find it helpful to follow along with written material while listening to each program. If you would like a transcript, please visit the toolbox website at www.cancersurvivaltoolbox.org, to print this section.]

[Narrator]

So, are there certain situations, circumstances, or challenges that older people face when they find out they have cancer? We believe there are, and that these issues deserve special attention. Examples of these issues include finding quality cancer care despite your age and other health problems; getting help paying for medications you need, but are not covered under your insurance; and standing up for your rights in a health care system that sometimes discriminates against the older patient.

Welcome to the Cancer Survival Toolbox program entitled "Topics for Older Persons." This is just one of a series of Cancer Survival Toolbox programs. There are also programs on communicating, finding information, making decisions, solving problems, negotiating, and ways to stand up for your rights. In addition, there are other "special topics" programs like ones on finding ways to pay for care and living beyond cancer, as well as programs on different types of cancers. You can listen to or read these programs online at www.canceradvocacy.org/toolbox; you can also download the audio files from iTunes.

The Cancer Survival Toolbox comes with a free Resource Booklet, also available at www.canceradvocacy.org/toolbox. Resources and organizations related to each Cancer Survival Toolbox topic are included.

Now, let's talk more about issues specifically relevant to older persons.

[Narrator]

Before we begin, let's remember that we have a specific definition for the term "cancer survivor" in the Cancer Survival Toolbox: from the time of diagnosis and for the balance of life, a person diagnosed with cancer is a "cancer survivor."