



## MINNESOTA ONCOLOGY

*Caring, down to a science.™*

### **When Stopping Chemotherapy is the Best Option**

Sometimes during the course of treatment your physician may talk with you about the wisdom of continuing chemotherapy if it is taking a toll on your well-being and/or when your tumor is no longer responding to treatment.

If and when this time comes, your doctor will talk with you and your family to make sure that you are all in agreement that this is the right decision for you. It is critically important that you feel confident that this is the right course of action for you, knowing that you will continue to get good care and receive support to help you through this transition.

Below are some questions that patients and families often have at this time.

#### **Why are we stopping anti-cancer therapies?**

For some patients whose cancer no longer responds to treatment, further chemotherapy will likely cause more harm than good.

Discontinuing therapy does not mean that we have ‘given up hope’. Many patients do very well after treatment is discontinued because they can use all their energy doing those things that help them feel happy and fulfilled. Your Minnesota Oncology physician and Care Team will do everything possible to make sure you live as long and as well as possible.

#### **What if you don't want to stop treatment yet?**

The phrase “stopping treatment” is misleading. Actually what's happening now is that your physician is “no longer prescribing more chemotherapy.” After careful consideration of all available options—and in your doctor’s best professional judgment—a conclusion has been reached that there are no longer any good options available for treating your cancer.

However, your physician and your Care Team will certainly continue to treat you, doing all that is possible to avoid pain, infections, and hospitalizations. Together, we will continue to aggressively treat any discomforts and prevent complications, whenever possible. We will continue to guide and support you as you face challenges and adjust to changes.

#### **Does this mean we are giving up?**

No. We are *not* giving up. We are *not* giving in. We are making wise decisions that will protect you from harmful interventions. We are doing all we can to help you live as long and as well as possible.

#### **How do you know this is the right decision?**

It is very important that we do not stop chemotherapy too soon. But it is equally important that we don't stop chemotherapy too late.

There's always another option out there to try. Prescribing a different chemotherapy treatment might be the *easy* thing for your doctor to do, but it would not be the *right* thing to do.

The most likely result of prescribing more chemotherapy treatment would be to make you feel sick and spoil what could have been good quality time. In some cases, additional chemotherapy might even shorten life.

### **Does this mean your case is hopeless?**

No. It means the time has come to let go of one particular hope: The hope that available cancer treatments can help us control your cancer. We can still nourish other hopes, including a hope of recovery.

### **How long do you have left?**

Nobody knows.

We can tell you the likely prognosis for patients in your situation. Your doctor can certainly discuss this with you if you wish. Knowing what usually happens in situations like yours over the next weeks and months can help you make important decisions about home and work.

But remember: A prognosis is *not* a prediction! It is simply an educated guess based on statistics drawn from observations of *past* patients with *similar* problems. Every year, some patients with your type of cancer outlive their prognosis. We are hoping that will be the case for you.

### **What can you hope for now?**

You can hope to...

- \* *Improve—many patients feel better after chemotherapy is stopped.*
- \* *Feel as well as possible—for as long as possible.*
- \* *Experience an unexpected recovery.*
- \* *Adjust to your situation as it changes.*
- \* *Embrace the opportunities to be with people you care about and enjoy all you can.*

You can also hope a new treatment becomes available that we can use. We will keep our eyes open for one.

### **What now?**

Together, we will prepare for the likely course of events and hope for the best possible outcome.

Your physician will continue to see you in the office for as long as you are able. And we can speak on the phone.

We will connect you to others who can answer your questions and offer valuable insights. We will refer you to professionals who can guide you through this transition and provide supportive care through whatever happens.

Lastly, we will help you find a balance between acceptance and hope that helps you live as fully as possible today, tomorrow and every single day.

—Your Caring Health Care Team