



CERTIFICATE NO : NCESMAH /2021/C1021789

A STUDY OF PATIENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PSYCHOSOCIAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Evidence is mounting that cancer patients' communication needs extend beyond illness and treatment-related issues to include a wide range of psychological concerns. Multiple studies have indicated that most patients wish to talk to their attending physician about psychological difficulties, and that most patients prefer to talk to their doctor about these matters rather than to a therapist or counsellor. But patients vary in how much they want to talk about psychological and social concerns, and those choices might shift as the disease progresses. Oncologists are under growing pressure to keep abreast of developments in cancer research, diagnostic tools, therapy options, and clinical trials. Oncologists are also tasked with including patients and their loved ones in medical decision-making and addressing psychological concerns. The ability to communicate with patients in a way that prioritizes their needs differs across doctors and does not improve automatically with practice. But training and practice can help you get better at it. It might be challenging for doctors to open up about patients' emotional or social problems.