Coping with Cancer

Guest Speaker: Dr. Richard McQuellon

Dr. McQuellon is a professor at the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center.

The goal of the meeting is to learn how we, the members, are managing our diagnosis and journey.

Dr. McQuellon started the meeting by saying two things make a difference;

* Courage
* Humor

There will be dark days.  The trick is not to go to the dark days too often.  Intrusive thoughts (i.e. thoughts of death) can be banished.  Prayer can help banish intrusive thoughts.

Banishing intrusive thoughts is a skill that can be developed.

Survivorship Skills

* Know yourself: For some, that may mean stay off the internet, trust physicians, and trust God.
* Everyone needs a support person: Having cancer is not the place for the Marlboro Man.
* Need to learn patience: Blessed are the flexible \_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Can only take one day at a time.  God is like a parent guiding a child on a plane.  God holds the ticket until the end.  We only get one day at a time.
* Realize you are not in control.  Have to proceed humbly and prayerfully.
* Physicians should never take away hope from a patient.

 At this point, Dr. McQuellon asked group members what coping techniques they employ.  Following are comments from group members.

Always call relative. Second, always use humor.

Half of the battle is organization.  Focus on what is happening, try not to focus on what cannot be changed.  Being organized gives one a feeling in some control.

As a friend, help and be an advocate.

Live for now.

Keep worries confined just to the time of the chemotherapy.

Think about relatives who survived cancer.  Think about something else.  Turn worry down.

Music is a good way to get away from intrusive thoughts.  Sing loud in the car.

Come from the ‘buck up school of parenting’.  Just keep going.

Stay busy on another project.  Focus on other people.

Let yourself sleep.  The body needs rest.  Our bodies are fighting something, so give it rest.

If wake in the middle of the night, pray.  Prior to sleep, flood the mind with positive thoughts.

Ask family and friends not to talk about cancer.

Go to First Friday at Novant Medical Center.  First Friday helps people not think about their cancer for a day.

Go to support group.  It helps to be able to talk and ‘get it all out there’.  Coming to the group gives us inspiration.

Turn on an audible book if my mind wanders onto cancer thoughts.

Cancer can push one to a bigger part of their self.  Everyone wants to be heard, cared for.

Social support is very important.  Support is linked to healing and longevity.

Friends and family help keep patient in a good frame of mind.

Saying the rosary helped with patience.  Member carries a rosary all the time.  Even had a cloth rosary so could take it with them to their CT scan.

Meditation is a tool that can be used to help.

Worry is like a rocking chair.  It will keep you busy, but it will not get you anywhere.

Dr.McQuellon ended the meeting with these comments.

* Talking about your condition does help.  However, you cannot tell your story to everyone.  You only have so much energy.
* Find your t\_\_\_ (truth?); music, marching bands.
* Always remember, there is hope.
* Do whatever brings you closer to hope.

Kindness is stronger than misery.