

Pancreatic Cancer

Background:

- Pancreatic cancer is a disease in which malignant (cancerous) cells form in the tissues of the pancreas
 - o The pancreas is a gland located behind the stomach and in front of the spine which creates the hormones to help the body digest food
- There are some factors that could put a person at risk for pancreatic cancer, which includes:
 - o Smoking
 - o Chronic pancreatitis which is an inflammation of the pancreas
 - o Hereditary, including hereditary pancreatitis
 - o Familial pancreatic cancer syndromes
 - o Long-standing diabetes
- There are some symptoms that people can look out for, which includes:
 - o Jaundice, which is the yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes
 - o Pain in a person's middle and upper abdomen and back
 - o Unexplainable weight loss
 - o Loss of appetite
 - o Fatigue
 - o Depression
- There are a few ways that doctors today use to help diagnose Pancreatic cancer, which include:
 - o CT scan (computed tomography)
 - o MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)
 - o Endoscopic ultrasound (EUS)
 - o Laparoscopy (surgical procedure to look at organs)
 - o Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP)
 - o Percutaneous transhepatic cholangiography (PTC; procedure used to X-ray liver and bile ducts)
 - o Biopsy (removal of tissue to view it under a microscope)
- Possible treatment options ~ There are no actual cures for this:
 - o Surgery
 - o Chemotherapy
 - o Radiation treatment
 - American Cancer Society reports that only about 23% of those diagnosed are still living after one year

Statement of the Problem:

Healthy People 2010 have a couple of goals. The first major goal is to Increase Quality and Years of Healthy People and the second is to Eliminate Health Disparities. The Third focus area goal has to do with cancer and it says that they wish to reduce the number of new cancer cases as well as the illness, disability, and death caused by cancer. Healthy People 2010 consider all cancers, including pancreatic cancer, one of the biggest problems or diseases that are around today. “Evidence suggests that several types of cancer can be prevented and that the prospects for surviving cancer continue to improve. The ability to reduce cancer death rates depends, in part, on the existence and application of various types of resources. First, the means to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information on prevention, early detection, and treatment to the public and to health care professionals are essential. Second, mechanisms or systems must exist for providing people with access to state-of-the-art preventive services and treatment. Where suitable, participation in clinical trials also should be encouraged. Third, a mechanism for maintaining continued research progress and for fostering new research is essential. Genetic information that can be used to improve disease prevention strategies is emerging for many cancers and may provide the foundation for improved effectiveness in clinical and preventive medicine services” (Healthy People 2010). They are doing everything they can to try to help people learn about the problem, what they can do and what to do after, as well as, like most of the world, helping to find a cure for cancer.

Epidemiologic Picture of the Problem:

- The American Cancer Society predicts that in 2006, about 33,730 people will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and about 32,300 will die because of it
- There are many risk factors listed by the American Cancer Society that show who in the population may be affected by the risk of developing pancreatic cancer
 - o Age ~ about 90% of patients diagnosed are older than 55
 - o Gender ~ men are more likely to have this cancer than women
 - o Race ~ African Americans are more affected by this cancer than white people
 - o Smoking ~ heavy smokers could raise their risk by two or three times and in about three out of every ten cases smoking is believed to be the cause of pancreatic cancer
 - o Diet ~ it is possible that eating a lot of red meat or pork can raise the risk of developing this cancer
 - o Obesity ~ those considered to be ‘very overweight’ have a 20% more chance of developing this disease

- Diabetes ~ pancreatic cancer is more commonly found among those who have diabetes
- Chronic Pancreatitis ~ those who have had this inflammation of the pancreas for a long term have a slightly higher chance of getting this cancer
- Work exposure ~ some chemicals have been known to rise the risk level for people, such as certain bug sprays, dyes, or gasoline products
- Family history ~ about one in ten cases are believed to be connected to the development of this cancer
 - Changed in DNA can leave people more susceptible to this and other cancers
- Stomach problems ~ having too much stomach acid or a certain bacteria called H. pylori can leave people to be more prone to this cancer
- The American Cancer Society gives tips to try to help people prevent getting this disease which includes living a healthy life; keeping a healthy diet cutting down on the amount of red meat, exercising, and not smoking

Solutions to the Problem:

There are many places that people can go for help when it comes to pancreatic cancer. There are many places that are willing to help in more ways than one. Whether it be giving information about the illness and possible ways to help get through it the best a person can to giving help to all of those who may be affected. Cancer is one of the biggest disease problems that we have right now, and there are many people all over the nation and even the world who are trying everything that they can to help people through this. From all of the organizations that I found, I picked the three that I liked the best or thought were the most helpful.

The American Cancer Society plays a major part in both trying to find a cure for cancer, and helping the patients and families that have been affected by this disease until a cure is found. They have a lot of helpful information online that can help answer any questions that one may have about this cancer and even ways that people can help. You can contact them in a couple of different ways, either online at www.cancer.org or they give 24-hour phone numbers to talk to an actual person.

There is also an organization called the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PanCAN) which is the first national patient advocacy organization for those diagnosed. PanCAN's goal is to reach out to people to show the need to find a

cure for this cancer. PanCAN's Patient and Liaison Services (PALS) offer a comprehensive program for pancreatic cancer patients, their families and even health professionals. Extensive patient information and guidance are available from trained PALS Associates. They can be reached in many ways including online at http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/partners/fp_pancan.htm, E-mail, and they give a phone number so that you may talk to a PALs associate Monday to Friday 9-5 PT.

I also came across an organization called CancerCare. They are a national nonprofit organization that provides free, professional help for all of those who may be affected by pancreatic cancer, or any cancer for that matter. They are known to be very helpful for those who not only have been diagnosed but also for helping the family and those around the patient who have been affected by this. Someone could reach them in a couple of ways either online at www.cancer.org, email or by phone.

Internet Resources:

- Cancer Quest is a Web site and program to help teach people learn more about different cancers, including pancreatic cancer, and what has been done and what will continue to happen to find a cure. They can be found on the web at www.cancerquest.org.
- There is The National Pancreas Foundation who are there to help teach people about all diseases of the pancreas, including cancer, what they are, the risks attached, and what to do about them. They can be found at <http://www.pancreasfoundation.org>.
- There is also the organization that goes by the name Pancreatic Cancer UK, whose slogan is 'Information, Support, Awareness, Research', and they do just that. It is really easy to navigate and get all the answers and support that you may need about this topic. They can be found on the web at <http://www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk>.

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Pancreatic Cancer (Class Handout)

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 - o Stomach problems ~ having too much stomach acid or a certain bacteria called H. pylori can leave people to be more prone to this cancer
- Treatment consists of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation treatment..
 - o The American Cancer Society reports that only about 23% of patients with cancer of the exocrine pancreas are still living one year after diagnosis. Only about 4% are still living five years after being diagnosed

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