

This is a fourth newsletter in a series of ONCORG Community Conversations. They're focused on relationships between doctors and patients, and the complexity of cancer.

February 2026 – Late Edition: The Battle has begun. 'Meet Your Multidisciplinary Team'



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Mr. Thomas is a military veteran who served 8 years in the USAF. He also spent 11 years in the automotive industry, 10 years in healthcare and 8 years with Apple Inc. supporting customer needs.

So he has a unique insight into what it takes to enhance the customer experience and obtain strong customer feedback, which is essential to a company's reputation. He also understands how to maximize performance from a team by encouraging collaboration.

In our earlier newsletter we talked about why cancer cells are so difficult to detect and treat. It was never intended to discourage you during your survivorship. Cancer survivorship is significantly improved over the past decade. It's because new cancer team structures communicate more efficiently, have access to better information, and work like a *multidisciplinary* group to battle the enemy cancer. They have better more precise technology to detect previously undetectable cancer cells.

What does that team look like? You have your primary oncologist who looks out for you and coordinates the multidisciplinary team (MDT), collaborating in ways to make sure nothing slips through the crack. The team is made up surgeons, radiation oncologists, pathologists, radiologists, pain management and obviously nurses. They meet regularly and their objective is 'YOU.' They make sure there are no treatment gaps, everyone's point of view is considered, and you're as comfortable as possible.

Not to get off-track, my friend Kelli has breast cancer that is now in her bone. Breast cancer that has spread to the bone is classified as Stage IV (metastatic) cancer, and is not curable. However, because of the MDT teams, it is treatable with advancements allowing many patients to live for years with good quality of life. Treatments focus on managing pain, strengthening bones, and slowing progression using systemic therapy, radiation, and bone-targeted medications.

This is why anyone with cancer should feel encouraged. But you have to be willing to fight because 'you' depend on 'you.' You are part of the team focused on you. It's important to have the emotional support from family or friends, or from various support groups like navigators or social workers.

Why is Communication so Important?

In the previous newsletter, we talked about how fighting cancer was like a military battle. We just talked about the multidisciplinary team. You see, communication is the cornerstone of any military battle. It ensures unity of effort, clear decision-making, and helps maintain safety. It is crucial to coordinate actions across units to achieve objectives. It keeps personnel informed and maintains morale.

It's how your MDT fights cancer for you. They meet regularly, use evidence-based treatment plans customized to the patient's specific situation. The military customizes their plans based on specific situations.

This careful coordination helps reduce treatment/testing gaps, and ensures all viewpoints are considered. It reduces time to make decisions. It reduces risks.

My friend is in considerable pain. Bone cancer hurts like no other pain because tumors press against nerves. They weaken the bone and sometimes lead to fractures. Bones have many nerve endings. Think of the times when you banged your shin. Hurt, didn't it?

Your MDT meets regularly, use technology to simultaneously document your information and decide the best treatment strategy. They monitor data to keep track of trends, and adjust accordingly. One of the hardest things to coordinate is the balancing of chemo when significant pain exists. My friend Kelli is dealing with this right now, and I'm very sad about this. She has a team to balance her treatment and her quality of care. I have faith in her and hope she has faith in her team. You gotta be willing to fight because the survivorship metrics keep getting better and better.

In our next ONCORG newsletter we'll describe the digital tools and information technology your MDT uses to improve the patient's survivorship. We'll learn a little about how Artificial Intelligence, WATSON and Machine Learning. Stay tuned!

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