



# Talking About Cancer Prognosis

## NCI Prognosis Video Series Viewer Guide for Health Care Providers

The National Cancer Institute (NCI), with help from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, has produced the NCI Prognosis Video Series to help cancer patients and their health care providers talk about prognosis. The series offers the perspectives of three cancer patients and their doctor, Anthony L. Back, M.D., an oncologist at the University of Washington and a nationally recognized expert in doctor-patient communication. The videos can be found along with other patient-friendly materials about prognosis on the NCI website at [www.cancer.gov/prognosis](http://www.cancer.gov/prognosis).

### The videos provide

- insight into some of the questions and feelings that patients and families bring to discussions about prognosis
- advice on talking about prognosis in a supportive and clear way

### Main points from the videos

- Most patients *do* want to talk about the future. But people vary in how and when they want to hear prognosis information, and in their levels of fear.
- A patient's desire for prognosis information may change during the course of care. Gauge interest over time, asking questions such as: "What do you want to know at this point? Do you prefer details or just the big picture?"
- You *can* talk effectively about prognosis without talking about survival statistics. But if someone asks about statistics and other details, explain using basic terms and examples.
- Being clear, kind, and honest about expected outcomes builds trust, even if the information is upsetting. Emotions such as sadness or anger are natural. Good communication empowers patients to make decisions that are right for them.

### The series of five videos includes

- **Understanding Your Cancer Prognosis** (6:48 min): The main video features three patients and Dr. Back, and illustrates key points about prognosis and ways to think and talk about it.
- **For Doctors: A Patient-Centered Approach** (4:12 min): Tips for health care providers on how to discuss prognosis with patients and families. (Best viewed after watching the main video.)
- Deeper insight from each patient's particular approach to prognosis:
  - **One Couple's Creative Response** (3:51 min): A husband and wife differ in what they each want to know about her colorectal cancer prognosis.
  - **Diving Out of the Dark** (4:16 min): A non-Hodgkin lymphoma patient is initially frustrated by not getting the prognostic information he seeks.
  - **From Anger to Acceptance** (3:54): A long-term survivor of pancreatic cancer wants to know only that which helps her to live each day to the fullest.