

CANCER IS A FAMILY AFFAIR

- ▶ Cancer disrupts the functioning of the family system
- ▶ Relationships among family members are usually affected
- ▶ Roles family members play, change accordingly
- ▶ In general the existing equilibriums within the family are upset

COMMON REACTIONS TO A CANCER DIAGNOSIS

- ▶ Shock
- ▶ Emotional numbness
- ▶ Denial
- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Despair and isolation
- ▶ Distress and despair
- ▶ Bargaining
- ▶ Fear of relapse
- ▶ Fear of dying

PATIENT-FAMILY

- ▶ Each patient is a different person with his own personality and coping style
- ▶ Each patient is part of a specific family unit and patient and family affect each other in dealing with cancer
- ▶ The patient's family need as much psychological support as the patient

CONCERNS OF FAMILY MEMBERS

- ▶ How do we respond to the illness so that we are most helpful to the patient
- ▶ How do we behave in the presence of the illness
- ▶ How do we behave towards the patient
- ▶ What can we say to help the patient
- ▶ What must we not say in case we harm the patient

HOW CAN THE FAMILY DO HARM

- ▶ When there are intra-familial conflicts
- ▶ When there is denial and rigidity
- ▶ When there is lack of extra-familial support systems

HOW CAN THE FAMILY HELP

- ▶ Through closeness and connectedness
- ▶ Through supportive family relationships
- ▶ Emotional expressiveness
- ▶ Ability to adapt to new circumstances
- ▶ Tolerance of individual members emotions