



Onslow County women who have or have had cancer reported that they were likely to miss medical appointments, need help navigating the healthcare system, are diagnosed at late stages of cancer, and want more support groups for their families, according to a recent Onslow Memorial Hospital survey conducted this fall. Male respondents did not report the same level of obstacles as their female counterparts. The cancer-specific survey was completed by 124 respondents.

#### MISSED MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

In an effort to further understand barriers to care in Onslow County, those taking the cancer survey were specifically asked, “While you were sick with cancer, were there any issues that kept you from keeping your medical appointments for tests, treatments, chemo, etc.? Check all that apply.” Respondents could choose from specific barriers to care such as language, transportation, finances, fear, child care, elder care, sickness, and ability to understand and keep track of the healthcare process. Women and those with government insurance, were more likely to say that they needed help understanding, or navigating the healthcare system, and that they were often too sick to keep their appointments. Ability to pay for co-pays and deductibles also topped the list of barriers to care for both men and women, but not for those with government insurance. A majority of respondents of the cancer survey, however, checked “other” and explained that they had no barriers.

	Language Barriers	Didn't have reliable transportation	Could not afford transportation	Had no insurance	Unable to pay co-pays/ deductibles	Was too sick to keep appointments	Fear (not ready to discuss treatment options)	Child or elder care unavailable	I needed someone to help me understand and keep track of the process.	Other (please specify)	1
Q23: Female (A)	0.00% 0	5.41% 2	5.41% 2	2.70% 1	10.81% 4	21.62% 8	8.11% 3	2.70% 1	16.22% 6	59.46% 22	8
Q23: Male (B)	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	22.22% 4	16.67% 3	11.11% 2	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	11.11% 2	66.67% 12	4
<b>Total Respondents</b>	0	3	2	5	7	10	4	1	8	34	

Similarly, preliminary results from more than 500 respondents to a countywide Community Health Assessment show that 18.21% of females stated that not being able to pay co-pays and deductibles prevented them from accessing care. In addition, results from the CHA show that women have more challenges with transportation. Females had a higher percentage of not keeping doctors' appointments due to transportation, 5.41% higher than men. (The CHA is a joint effort between the Onslow County Health Department and Onslow Memorial Hospital. Results will be published in 2016)

Those taking the cancer survey were specifically asked what questions they had when they were first diagnosed. 74.7% percentage of women checked "What do I do now?" compared to 60% of men, another example of the female respondents' lack of knowledge about how to navigate the healthcare system.

**When you were first diagnosed, what questions did you have? Check all that apply.**

	Why do you think I have cancer?	Is there a chance that I don't have cancer?	What type of cancer is it?	What stage is the cancer? How bad is it?	Will the cancer spread to other parts of my body?	Am I going to die?	What do I do now?	How much is this going to cost?	Can you cure it?	Other (please specify)	Total
Q23: Female (A)	17.24% 15	20.69% 18	55.17% 48	66.67% 58	56.32% 49	24.14% 21	74.71% 65	19.54% 17	45.98% 40 B	12.64% 11	280.33% 342
Q23: Male (B)	17.14% 6	17.14% 6	57.14% 20	60.00% 21	65.71% 23	34.29% 12	60.00% 21	20.00% 7	77.14% 27 A	20.00% 7	122.95% 150
<b>Total Respondents</b>	21	24	68	79	72	33	86	24	67	18	122

**LATE STAGES**

Another finding from the cancer survey was that women were much more likely to be diagnosed in stage 3 and 4 than their male counterparts. The percentage of men diagnosed at stage 3 (5.56%) was significantly lower than for women (20.45%). Men were almost twice as likely to respond "I don't know" when asked what stage their cancer was upon first diagnosis.

	One	Two	Three	Four	I don't know	Other (please specify)	Total
Q23: Female (A)	29.55% 26	21.59% 19	20.45% 18 B	7.95% 7	12.50% 11	7.95% 7	70.97% 88
Q23: Male (B)	25.00% 9	16.67% 6	5.56% 2 A	16.67% 6	22.22% 8	13.89% 5	29.03% 36
<b>Total Respondents</b>	35	25	20	13	19	12	124

## SUPPORT GROUPS

Respondents were also asked about cancer-specific support groups for Onslow County. Both male and female respondents said that support groups for cancer patients were “very needed” with women at 54.7% and men at 48.4%.

### Q14: Are support groups for cancer patients needed in our area?

	Very needed	Not Needed	Somewhat Needed	No Opinion	Total
Q23: Female (A)	54.76% 46	2.38% 2	17.86% 15	25.00% 21	71.79% 84
Q23: Male (B)	48.48% 16	3.03% 1	21.21% 7	27.27% 9	28.21% 33
<b>Total Respondents</b>	62	3	22	30	117

When asked about Onslow County’s current support groups for family and friends, women responded differently from men with 16.85 of the women describing the current offerings as “completely inadequate” compared to only 3% of their male counterparts.

### Q16: Are there adequate support services or groups for friends and families of cancer patients?

	Completely Adequate	Somewhat Adequate	Somewhat Inadequate	Completely Inadequate	No Opinion	Total
Q23: Female (A)	4.82% 4	24.10% 20	13.25% 11	16.87% 14 B	40.96% 34	71.55% 83
Q23: Male (B)	12.12% 4	12.12% 4	18.18% 6	3.03% 1 A	54.55% 18	28.45% 33
<b>Total Respondents</b>	8	24	17	15	52	116

## HEALTH STATUS AND NUTRITION

Of the residents who participated in the ongoing Community Health Assessment, 46.8% of females said being overweight or obese was an issue they face. In contrast with the male residents who took the survey, females were 17.1% higher in the overweight or obese category, and 33.71% of female residents said that they do not eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, due to the cost. In the hospital's cancer survey, when compared to the Cancer Survey, 40% of the females surveyed said that they were definitely interested in receiving more information on nutrition or health eating versus 26.4% of the men.

<b>Healthy Behaviors</b>					
	<b>Already have enough information</b>	<b>Definitely interested in receiving more information</b>	<b>Somewhat interested in receiving more information</b>	<b>Not interested in receiving any information</b>	<b>Total</b>
Q23: Female (A)	<b>41.89%</b> 31	<b>29.73%</b> 22	<b>13.51%</b> 10	<b>14.86%</b> 11	<b>62.71%</b> 74
Q23: Male (B)	<b>46.88%</b> 15	<b>28.13%</b> 9	<b>15.63%</b> 5	<b>9.38%</b> 3	<b>27.12%</b> 32
<b>Fitness and Exercise</b>					
	<b>Already have enough information</b>	<b>Definitely interested in receiving more information</b>	<b>Somewhat interested in receiving more information</b>	<b>Not interested in receiving any information</b>	<b>Total</b>
Q23: Female (A)	<b>37.50%</b> 30	<b>33.75%</b> 27	<b>13.75%</b> 11	<b>15.00%</b> 12	<b>67.80%</b> 80
Q23: Male (B)	<b>50.00%</b> 17	<b>29.41%</b> 10	<b>11.76%</b> 4	<b>8.82%</b> 3	<b>28.81%</b> 34
<b>Nutrition and Healthy Eating</b>					
	<b>Already have enough information</b>	<b>Definitely interested in receiving more information</b>	<b>Somewhat interested in receiving more information</b>	<b>Not interested in receiving any information</b>	<b>Total</b>
Q23: Female (A)	<b>36.25%</b> 29	<b>40.00%</b> 32	<b>13.75%</b> 11	<b>10.00%</b> 8	<b>67.80%</b> 80
Q23: Male (B)	<b>52.94%</b> 18	<b>26.47%</b> 9	<b>14.71%</b> 5	<b>5.88%</b> 2	<b>28.81%</b> 34

**Additional results of the Cancer Survey (not sorted by any group):**

Navigation through the healthcare system during cancer diagnosis and treatment was a concern to a majority of the respondents, regardless of gender, as seen by 70.49% of 122 respondents who indicated they asked “What do I do now?” when first diagnosed with cancer. Wanting to know the severity or stage of the cancer (64.75%), if it would spread to other areas (59.02%) and the type of cancer (55.74%) were the other most common concerns.

When asked about support groups, 71.79% of 117 respondents indicated that support groups for cancer patients were somewhat or very needed in our area, and 27.59% of 116 responded that support services or groups for friends & families of cancer patients were somewhat or completely inadequate.

When asked where they get their health information 94.35% said doctors/health care providers, 42.74% said the internet, 16.94% said the hospital, 16.13% said family/friends and 11.29% said pharmacists. (Other included social media/health department/library/newspaper/radio/church/tv/work less than 6% for each.)

Depression was a concern for many of the respondents. Of 122 responding, 46.72% said that they struggled with depression while sick, and 30.63 % of 111 respondents indicated they continued to struggle with depression after the cancer was gone/in remission.

	Indicated they needed help with dealing with...
Coping with a cancer diagnosis	47.01%
Talking to family & children about cancer	30.44%
Dealing w/ emotional effects of cancer	52.99%
Fear of cancer coming back	59.09%
life after cancer	41.51%

	definitely or somewhat interested in receiving more information
managing stress	38%
relaxation w/ guided imagery/visualization	47.17%
healthy behaviors	43.40%
fitness and exercise	45.62%
nutrition and healthy eating	50%

	free/low cost screenings most needed in our community
fecal occult blood test	18.37%
clinical breast exams	46.94%
PSA test	22.45%
skin cancer screenings	35.71%