

[TRACK 2: TAKING THE LEAD]

Joan, Oncology Nurse: Part I

[Joan]

Before we continue, you may wonder, "Why should I make decisions about my cancer?" You may be thinking, "I fully trust my doctor, family or others to make decisions for me, so why should I bother?" Actually, there are many reasons why you should take the lead in making decisions about your cancer. First, the doctor who decides your treatment today may not be the same one who will decide your treatments in the future. Your life may change, you may move, your health insurance may change, or other things beyond your control may change. Leaving decisions about your health completely in someone else's hands could place you in a risky position. Ask yourself the following question: "Am I willing to risk having someone else who may not know all about my life make decisions about me?" Whether your answer is "yes" or "no," please continue with this program to make certain you are comfortable with your answer.

[Joan]

Second, studies about cancer survivors show that those who are active in making decisions about their cancer treatment and cancer care tend to manage the side effects of their treatment better than those who have little or no knowledge about their cancer. These studies also show that when people do things to help themselves during treatment, they have less tiredness, pain, nausea, vomiting, and other side effects from their cancer. Cancer survivors get to know their bodies and how they respond to treatment. This knowledge lets them respond to side effects and manage them in their daily lives.

[Narrator]

To show you why this is important, let's hear how others have responded to their cancer diagnoses and how they prefer to make decisions. Jim is a 67-year-old African American man who recently retired. He lives with his wife, Eve. They have been married for 40 years and have three adult children, two sons, and a daughter. See if you have been in a similar situation. How did you feel and what did you do?