

[TRACK 5: SURVIVOR STORIES: OTHER RESOURCES AND HOW TO FIND THEM]

[Pam]

After my diagnosis, I called the cancer center and asked for help getting a consultation. The person at the referral office was very helpful. Up to this point I'd depended on my doctor and nurse practitioner to help me coordinate the needed tests and consults to confirm my diagnosis. But now that I have my diagnosis and am exploring the right treatment plan for me, I have different questions and concerns – wondering about insurance coverage, concerns with work, dealing with my family and my own emotional issues. How do I find people who are experts?

It was my nurse practitioner who told me about the resource people at the cancer center where I would be going for treatment, including oncology social workers, clinical nurse specialists, patient advocate representatives, case managers, and financial counselors. All these people could help me find my way through the system – I think of this as “navigating” – and manage my cancer care.

[Narrator]

To help those with cancer identify needed resources, many cancer programs use navigators. Some navigators are lay people. Some are nurses or social workers. They are found in a variety of cancer specialty areas – but particularly in those areas where diagnoses and treatment planning are especially complex, such as breast, prostate, and colon cancer programs. In these settings, the nurse navigator works with various doctors to help newly diagnosed patients learn about their diagnoses and understand pathology reports and the treatment options suggested. Nurse and social worker navigators often help set up second opinions and referrals to other available resources, including those in the local community.

Find out if your cancer care center or a local cancer resource facility employs a navigator, and if so, ask to meet with him or her (or someone whose job is similar). Talk about your needs, questions you have, and ways the navigator might help you.