

# Patient Empowerment in the Management of Chronic Myeloid Leukemia

Melanie Coleman, RN, BSN



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Patient empowerment is a patient-centered approach to care in which healthcare providers nurture patients' innate abilities to self-manage and incorporate patient goals for therapy into the overall management plan. Standard care of chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) requires lifelong medication with oral therapy and regular follow-up. The success of CML treatment, therefore, depends on a high degree of patient involvement and motivation, as well as strong collaboration between patients and healthcare providers. Oncology nurses can support patients with CML from the time of diagnosis to the end of treatment to ensure they maintain high levels of involvement in their care. At the author's center, patients who most actively collaborate with their physicians in treatment decisions take personal responsibility for the quality of their care and show good adherence to treatment. In the current article, the author discusses the potential effect of patient response to cancer diagnosis on clinical outlook and describes strategies in place at the cancer center to ensure that patients diagnosed with CML have the best chance at keeping their cancer under control.

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**P**atients newly diagnosed with cancer often believe the misconception that a cancer diagnosis automatically means a death sentence, but survival after diagnosis depends on many factors, including type of cancer, stage at diagnosis, and response to initial therapy (American Cancer Society, 2013). For example, chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) is a hematologic cancer characterized by the overgrowth of myeloid cells in the bone marrow and their accumulation in the peripheral blood. Most patients with CML are diagnosed in the early chronic phase (CML-CP) of disease (Cortes et al., 2006). With modern therapy, survival rates of patients with CML have improved dramatically since 2001 (Björkholm et al., 2011; Kantarjian, O'Brien, et al., 2012), and CML-CP has been rendered a chronic condition that is manageable with continuous lifelong medication for most patients.

Receiving a diagnosis of CML is an extremely stressful event, after which patients may experience feelings ranging from anger to helplessness (Guilhot et al., 2013). In addition, once patients find their way to a new normal after diagnosis, they

must undergo treatment that may last a lifetime. What can be done to encourage a more positive outlook? What can be done to ensure that motivation stays high for patient adherence over the long course of treatment? How can patients be empowered to play a positive role in the management of their disease?

Oncology nurses often are in a position to foster and maintain strong healthcare relationships with their patients. Recognizing the links that connect patient empowerment, patient involvement in care, health-related quality of life (HRQOL), adherence, and clinical outcomes, oncology nurses should seek to empower patients to have greater involvement in their care. The management of patients with CML has become more prevalent because of the extension of life expectancy afforded by modern therapy (Huang, Cortes, & Kantarjian, 2012). As more patients live longer with CML as a chronic condition, healthcare providers and patients must stay involved and motivated for many years.

The current article outlines clinical evidence for standard therapy for CML and summarizes clinical findings that connect the concepts of patient empowerment, patient involvement in