Welcome to this quick guide on Cancer Treatment Guidelines. Moving through this guide is easy. To view a topic at any time, click the menu button. To move forward, click on the NEXT button. To move backwards, click on the BACK button. To fast forward, click and drag this button. Use this button to play or pause the course. Click on this button for Closed Captioning. You can view the resources available to download by clicking on this button.

After you complete the quick guide, you will be asked to take a Quiz. You will also be asked to give us your feedback on the guide by completing an Evaluation. You are now ready to begin. To get started, click the Next button.

When you have cancer, you enter a world where everyone seems to be speaking another language.

You will need to learn this new vocabulary to make treatment decisions. It helps to learn about the models used to deliver and pay for cancer care. The models are designed with these goals:

- Improve health care and create a better patient experience
- Help patients and doctors make informed decisions about their cancer care
- Improve patient outcomes and
- Reduce costs

This unit of CancerEd Online focuses on Cancer Treatment Guidelines. There are two main types of cancer treatments, local and systemic. Local treatments are used at the tumor site. They include:

- Surgery
- Radiation

Systemic treatments can kill or slow the growth of cancer cells throughout the body. They include:

- Chemotherapy
- Hormone Therapy
- Targeted Therapy
- Immunotherapy
Not all cancers are treated the same way.

Some chemotherapy drugs work better on blood cancers, while others work better on tumors.

Also, two people with the same type of cancer might each require different types of treatments.

One woman with breast cancer might need a lumpectomy, radiation and hormone therapy while another might need a mastectomy and chemotherapy.

One man with prostate cancer may need surgery right away. Another may be able to start with watchful waiting or active surveillance.

Doctors use cancer treatment guidelines to make decisions about the best care for a specific patient.

The guidelines are developed by panels of experts who have experience treating a specific type of cancer.

Each panel typically includes pathologists, medical oncologists, surgeons, radiation therapists and mental health professionals.

Many also include nurses, palliative care specialists and patient advocates. The panels are brought together by professional medical organizations. The experts review evidence from research studies, clinical trials, published reports and medical meetings. They also draw from their own experience treating patients.

Guidelines are published and made widely available.

Doctors do not receive financial incentives for using or following treatment guidelines.

Here is an example of one type of cancer treatment guideline. It is for colon cancer. It was developed by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network. As new research results come in from clinical trials, guidelines are updated.

Make sure you have the most recent version.

The guidelines will also list the names of the experts who developed them. Treatment guidelines can be set up like a flow chart, a table, or a series of boxes. They might also be called algorithms. This is one page of the colon cancer guidelines. This page explains how different stages of cancers are treated.
The “T” “N” and “M” might look confusing. But they are a just a code doctors use to describe whether, and how far, the cancer has spread. This flows to recommendations for observation or treatment. They are listed under adjuvant therapy—treatment given after surgery.

This flows to the next step—ongoing checkups and tests to see if the cancer recurs. If a cancer recurs, the treatment changes. Another page shows options for what to do if your cancer spreads or comes back.

A cancer that spreads to different organs is called metastatic. This page shows treatment options to help control these cancers.

Many patients find cancer treatment guidelines confusing.

Organizations that develop guidelines often publish materials for patients that include the same information but are easier to understand. The National Cancer Institute provides helpful treatment information summaries. Their materials for patients are easier to understand than the ones written for health care professionals.

Many cancer support organizations also have materials that help patients understand treatment guidelines.

Links to all of the materials and organizations you've learned about are available at the end of the course.

There are specific guidelines for each type of cancer. Your doctor will use guidelines for:

- The type of cancer you have
- The stage of your cancer

Your doctors will also take into account:
- Any treatments you have already had for your cancer, and
- Your overall health

It is important to look at clinical trial options as you make decisions about your cancer treatment.

Following a specific cancer treatment guideline will not prevent you from taking part in a clinical trial.

Guidelines are very useful, but cancer treatment is also individual. If your doctors are not using the guidelines, it doesn't mean that they are doing anything wrong or you are not getting the best care.
Even so, if you are getting care that differs from the guidelines, you should ask your doctor why.

You should talk to your doctors about whether and how they use cancer treatment guidelines.

**Narrator:** Let’s watch a quick scenario. Your job is to help this colon cancer patient ask his oncologist the best questions about his treatment.

**Doc:** That would be my recommendation. Do you understand and are you comfortable with what we have talked about?

**Patient:** Why do you think this treatment is best for me?

**Doc:** Good question. This is the standard treatment for your cancer. It is what the National Comprehensive Cancer Network recommends in its guidelines.

**Patient:** Can you give me a copy of the guidelines or is there a patient version?

**Doc:** Yes, there is a patient version. Let me write down the link for you. Anything else?

**Patient:** Have studies shown this treatment really is better than my other options.

**Doc:** Studies have found this is the most effective chemotherapy for your type of cancer.

**Patient:** Are there clinical trials I should consider?

**Doc:** There may be one or two trials that you are eligible for. I will ask our oncology nurse to get you information about them.

**Patient:** This is a lot to think about. I will get back to you after I learn more about the clinical trials. If I have more questions who should I contact?

**Narrator:** If your doctor isn’t using any guidelines you’ll need to ask why. Something like this:

**Patient:** How did you decide this is the best treatment for me?

**Narrator:** Be sure to take notes, and bring someone with you to the appointment. That can help you more easily remember and understand how your doctor decided on your recommended choices for treatment.
**Remember:** Guidelines are not the final word. They are recommendations to help you and your doctor decide what is the best care for you.

Many things help you and your doctor make decisions. These include the type of cancer you have, your overall health and the things in your life that are important to you - your values and your goals.

Congratulations you’re almost done with the course.

Congratulations you’re almost done with the quick guide. The next step is to take the Quiz. Once you have completed the Quiz, you will be asked to evaluate the guide. We appreciate your feedback. After you complete the Evaluation, click on the close button. The guide details page will allow you to download a PDF of the full guide, a list of Resources and use the Question Builder to create a list of questions to bring to your next doctor's appointment. Please click on the Quiz link to start the Quiz.