

How can you ensure patients are reporting side effects?

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Thank you for joining me. My name is Robert Orlowski, I am a professor in the Department of Lymphoma and Myeloma and in the Department of Experimental Therapeutics, and the director of the Myeloma Section at University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. One of the questions that I frequently am asked is, "What are some tips about ways that can be used to ensure that patients report all of the side effects that they are feeling while they are on chemotherapy?" And there is a number of approaches that we use at MD Anderson which I think may be very helpful to you as well. One is to make sure that both the nurses and the doctors, as well as other health care professionals involved in the patient's care ask these questions, because the more questions that are asked, the greater is the likelihood that we will be able to capture all of the side effects that are occurring. Another one is to make sure to reassure the patient that even if a dose reduction is needed, or if one of the drugs that they are getting which is causing a side effect needs to be stopped, that their outcome can still be excellent. Just as one example, we know from the bortezomib literature that patients who have a dose reduction due to neuropathy still have excellent outcomes, and oftentimes I think patients worry that if they report a side effect, we are going to stop their therapy and that will influence their outcome. Fortunately we know now that in fact that is not the case. And finally, I think it is effective to remind patients that if they are on a drug that for some reason they cannot tolerate, because of the number of options are now available which are much greater than was the case before, the chances are that you will be able to find a different drug that the patient can tolerate, which hopefully the myeloma will tolerate very poorly, leading to the optimal outcome, which is maximal reduction in the myeloma with a minimal reduction in the patient's quality of life.