

Colon Cancer: Caring for the Aging

Key Survey Findings

As part of the **Colon Cancer: Caring for the Aging** Program, the Alliance for Aging Research commissioned a survey of oncologists to explore the role of caregivers in patient care and decision-making. Over 100 oncologists were interviewed, all of whom practice in the United States, treat at least 10 colorectal cancer patients per month, and have been practicing between 3 and 30 years. The survey included questions on how many patients have caregivers, who those caregivers are, their importance in disease management, their primary roles, and their participation in communication and treatment options.

Some of the key findings from the survey are outlined below:

- Six out of 10 (62.9%) colon cancer patients are 65 years or older.
- 64% of physicians strongly or somewhat agree that elderly colon cancer patients have a more difficult time managing their disease than younger patients.
- 41% of physicians strongly or somewhat agree that these patients do not ask the most relevant questions concerning their disease management.
- 77% of physicians agree that colon cancer patients 65+ experienced a better outcome when a caregiver was involved due to increased communication.
- 81% said that they depend on caregivers a great deal or somewhat to act as an intermediary between themselves and their 65+ patients.
- Nearly all of the physicians (97%) consider the caregiver an ally.
- All physicians (100%) perceive the caregiver as part of the team involved in the management of elderly colon cancer patients.
- 90% of physicians feel that the caregiver has a moderate to major impact on the decision-making process related to the patient's disease management.
- However, only around 64% of colon cancer patients 65+ have the support of a caregiver.
- A spouse or partner is most often the caregiver (92%).
- The caregivers most often:
 - Provide emotional support for the patient (94%);

- Participate in doctor's visits and in decisions about disease management options (89%); and
- Transport the patient to and from doctor's appointments (90%).