

WHERE CAN LOVED ONES, RELATIVES AND CAREGIVERS OF GYNAECOLOGICAL CANCER PATIENTS TURN TO FOR SUPPORT?



"I feel guilty about the feeling I wanted to run away from it."

"I am not sure about what to say to support her. I am afraid to say the wrong things."



Introduction

A gynaecological cancer diagnosis changes the life of a patient, but also of their partner, children, relatives, colleagues, friends. Most relatives feel it is their task to help their loved one and are reluctant to ask for help or attention for themselves.

Gynaecological cancer patients who don't want to increase the burden on their loved ones, can turn to patient groups for sharing their worries. But where do their loved ones turn to?

Olijf started a new platform for those important people who support our gynaecological cancer patients.

Method

A survey spread among our own 150 volunteers, social media and newsletter readers brought us a lot of useful information about the issues our relatives struggle with.

Our questions were mainly aimed at defining the kind of support which would have been helpful during the period our loved ones and caretakers needed it.

Results

The results helped us to get an insight in the kind of support that was most needed.

Three most important issues popped up:

- How to cope with fear, grief and sense of loss. Either for themselves or for their loved ones.
- How to support the patient.
- Recognition, someone to talk to who has been there and stories of others and how they coped with their role as caregiver/friend/partner/child.

Conclusions

Olijf started a platform for the people around our gynaecological cancer patients/survivors/surviving relatives where they can find help on a practical and/or emotional level.

Our loved ones now have a place where they can get the info, support, tips, conversations, which they need so much during this stressful period in their lives on the following subjects:

- informal care (how to combine your own life with caring for your loved ones)
- work (how to combine your job with caring for your loved one)
- grief and loss (how to cope with grief and loss during the time your loved one is sick and after she has eventually passed away)

We spread their stories in our magazine, our website and social media. We will organize a special webinar around this subject and we will connect with our local hospitals, cancer support organizations and of course our own participants to help our loved ones and other relatives feel there is a place where they can be supported.

We have a team of experienced people who have lost a loved one or have a gynaecological patient relative, to answer questions by phone, mail or WhatsApp.



"How can I cope with setback, depression, sense of powerlessness."

"I didn't dare to ask questions about medical details and perspectives of the disease."

