



Nutrition Counseling

A Counselor's Perspective

One afternoon, I received a call from one of the social workers at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center. She told me about an 82-year-old woman who had recently started chemotherapy for newly diagnosed breast cancer. The woman lived alone in South Philadelphia, but had a supportive daughter nearby and frequent visitors from the neighborhood. Despite the support and frequent visitors, the patient seemed to weigh less with each visit.

I met with the patient who explained that she had a good appetite, but did not have the energy to prepare meals. We discussed the importance of having snacks in the house that are easy to prepare like canned tuna, peanut butter, cheese, and yogurt. Although, she said she wasn't worried about the weight loss, I disagreed. I explained that further weight loss would make her immune system weak as well as her muscles, which could result in falls and hospitalizations. I thought she would benefit from a service called MANNA, Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Alliance.

MANNA is a non-profit organization that provides meals for people in the surrounding Philadelphia areas with serious illnesses. This service delivers clients three meals per day, seven days a week for six months at no cost to the client. The patient agreed that she would benefit from MANNA's services. I completed a referral for the patient, and the following week the patient was enjoying three meals per day. The patient was thankful for the service and reported that the meals are delicious and helped to alleviate the stress surrounding meal time.

For more information about nutrition services at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center, please contact Debra DeMille MS, RD, CSO, at 215.829.6560 or Carly Roop, RD, at 215.829.6737.