HER2+ EMPOWERMENT
LISTENING SUMMIT EVENT SUMMARY:
MANAGING SIDE EFFECTS

Author: Virginia Leach
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the HER+ Empower Listening Summit series is to shed light on this breast cancer sub-type. ANGELs Tameka Johnson, Amenda Lacy, and Maricia Cole attended this event along with Oncology Nurse Eric Cohen to share their expertise. If you or a loved one has experienced breast cancer treatment, follow these tips to help reduce side effects: stay hydrated, keep a strict sleep schedule, reduce your stress, keep up your physical activity, and sustain a nutritious diet.

SHORT, LONG, AND LATE SIDE EFFECTS – WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

According to the Mayo Clinic, HER2+ breast cancer "tests positive for a protein called human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2). This protein promotes the growth of cancer cells." As discussed by Oncology Nurse Eric Cohen, the difference between short, long, and late side effects depends on when they start after cancer treatment. For example, short-term effects happen almost immediately once treatment has begun. For many, this will include experiencing nausea, hair loss, and digestion issues that can lead to constipation and/or diarrhea. These side effects can start as early as the first round of treatment is complete or within the first few sessions.

Long-term side effects also start at the onset of cancer treatment, but they take a long time to go away. Unfortunately, these side effects can take so long to go away that many do not notice they have been relieved of the issue because they have experienced the side effect since the beginning of their cancer treatment. A common side effect that falls into this category includes neuropathy, also known as peripheral neuropathy. The Cleveland Clinic describes this side effect as pain, weakness, and tingling from nerve damage in various parts of the body. This long-term side effect can take years to dissipate.

Late-term side effects operate much differently than short and long-term side effects because they happen after specific cancer treatments have stopped. For example, those diagnosed with breast cancer may be unaware they will occur or recognize it is happening because of the delay between the cancer treatment and its initial signs. One side effect that can be categorized as a late-term side effect is cardiotoxicity. The University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center defines cardiotoxicity as "direct damage to the heart" after the body is introduced to cancer drugs and treatment. This late-term side effect has several symptoms, such as shortness of breath, chest pain, heart palpitations, fluid retention in the legs, and dizziness.
1. Keep a routine sleep schedule!

Cancer treatment tires the body and the mind. To help with the fatigue, set up a routine that works for your schedule to go to bed and wake up. A sleep schedule you stick to, even on the weekends, can help regulate your body through cancer treatment.

2. Create a nourishing, tasty diet!

A nourishing diet does not have to be bland, but there are things to stay away from after or while undergoing treatment. For example, instead of using a lot of spicy or sweetened flavors in your foods, try using fresh or dried herbs. Help your digestion by limiting dairy as well.

3. Stay physically active!

One of the best pieces of advice Oncology Nurse Eric Cohen gave audience members at the HER2 Empowerment Listening Summit was to stay active as much as possible during and after treatment. There are different levels to staying physically active. Walking, riding a stationary bike, or doing yoga can help you stay healthy and reduce future cardiovascular issues. Attend one or all of TLF's virtual Pure Cat classes to meet your exercise needs today, for free!

Are you interested in learning more about the Tigerlily Foundation? Sign up for the newsletter to stay connected to TLF!