

# 19<sup>th</sup> Euro Congress on Cancer Science and Therapy & 25<sup>th</sup> Cancer Nursing & Nurse Practitioners Conference

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### **Why is early psychosocial screening important in pediatric cancer?**

**D**iagnosis of childhood cancer and its aggressive treatment can have a devastating psychosocial impact on the whole family. The child undergoing cancer treatment encounters a host of negative experiences which may result in fear, anxiety and pain and severe psychosocial distress. Parents of children with cancer also face devastating situations and disruption of daily life that can result in severe psychosocial distress and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Parents' behavior and anxiety during their child's medical procedures predicts their child's distress reaction and child and parent adjustment after diagnosis is the best predictor of adjustment two years later. Although the majority of families adjust well over time significant number experience long-term psychosocial difficulties. In this presentation, the author will describe some of his research evaluating the impact of providing early psychosocial risk information to the treating team, based on the psychosocial assessment tool (PAT) completed by parents shortly after diagnosis. Compared to a randomized control group (no information to treating team), results will describe reduced distress and improved quality of life (QOL) in the child with cancer and his/her parents and siblings six months from baseline. Additional findings from a more recent and larger study will also be presented describing mental health outcomes in the child with cancer, one parent and one sibling. Implications for patient care will be discussed.

### **Biography**

Maru Barrera completed her MA from the University of North Carolina in USA and PhD at McMaster University in Canada. She is a Psychologist and Senior Associate Scientist in Hematology/Oncology and Department of Psychology at Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, ON; and an Associate Professor at University of Toronto in Medical Sciences and Education. Her research includes: Development and RCT assessment of group intervention programs for children treated for brain tumors and for siblings and investigating early psychosocial screening for improved psychosocial outcomes. She has published over 115 scientific articles in high impact scientific journals.

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