

# ATTENTION EMERGENCY ROOM PERSONNEL:

## WHEN CANCER PATIENTS COME TO THE ER ... BE AWARE OF THE DANGER SIGNS

### IMAGINE THIS:

**8:00 pm**

It's 8 p.m. and Ned checks in at the front desk of his local ER complaining of fever and flu-like symptoms.

**9:30 pm**

Ned is examined by a triage nurse at 9:30 p.m. Ned doesn't mention he has cancer or that he just finished a round of chemo because he's certain he just has the flu.

**12:00 am**

It's midnight and Ned is seen by a physician. By this time, Ned's temperature has increased, and he is immediately admitted to the hospital for febrile neutropenia.

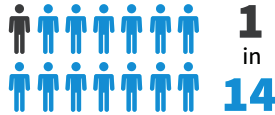
**2:30 am**



At 2:30 a.m. he is diagnosed with a serious infection that is potentially life-threatening, and will delay his next round of chemo, or worse.

### THIS HAPPENS ... A LOT!

- 60,000 cancer patients in the U.S. hospitalized.
- Among those, 1 in 14 will die from this complication.\*



### WHY DON'T CANCER PATIENTS SPEAK UP?



Cancer patients may be too overwhelmed, embarrassed or simply unaware that their fever could be a sign of something so serious that it could put them at risk for infection, sepsis and even death.

### MAKE A DIFFERENCE

#### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- A fever may be the only sign of infection and should be treated as a medical emergency.
- Quick action can save a life.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- When you are checking-in patients, ask them if they are undergoing chemotherapy, or if they have had chemotherapy in the last 2 weeks.
- If this question is not currently included in your ER check-in procedures, work with those in charge to include it.

#### WHAT THIS WILL MEAN

- This could be the difference between them staying on their treatment schedule or being hospitalized – or worse, dying.

Caggiano V, et al. *Cancer*. 2005; 103: 1916-1924.

*Preventing Infections in Cancer Patients* is a comprehensive initiative led by CDC and the CDC Foundation to reduce infections in cancer patients. For more information on this topic and to learn more about this program, please visit [www.PreventCancerInfections.org](http://www.PreventCancerInfections.org).

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