Celebrating 10 Years of Collaboration to Prevent Infections in Cancer Patients

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Undergoing treatment for cancer can be an overwhelming experience, and there is a lot to digest. One of the most important things for people going through chemotherapy to understand is the impact that the treatment can have on their immune system. Chemotherapy can weaken a person's immune system (known as neutropenia), leading to an increased risk of infection, treatment disruptions, hospitalizations, and sometimes even death. According to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an infection linked to neutropenia is one of the most serious side effects — hospitalizing more than 100,000 adults and children in the United States with cancer in 2012.

That's why in 2009, CDC and the CDC Foundation, with financial support from Amgen Oncology, announced the Preventing Infections in Cancer Patients (PICP) program that would provide evidence-based resources for patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers on how to lower the risk of infection. Over the past decade, we have continued to evolve the program and extend its reach with educational tools like TINA, a fully animated virtual healthcare provider, and an English and Spanish website featuring educational information and a risk assessment tool. To help celebrate the program's 10th anniversary we developed our first-ever PSA.

As an oncologist and close friend to several cancer survivors, I understand how people dealing with a cancer diagnosis are incredibly overwhelmed with information. If you or someone you love has cancer, I encourage you to stay positive, take it one day at a time, and know the steps you can take to lower your risk of infection during chemotherapy.

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