

Talking with Cancer Patients

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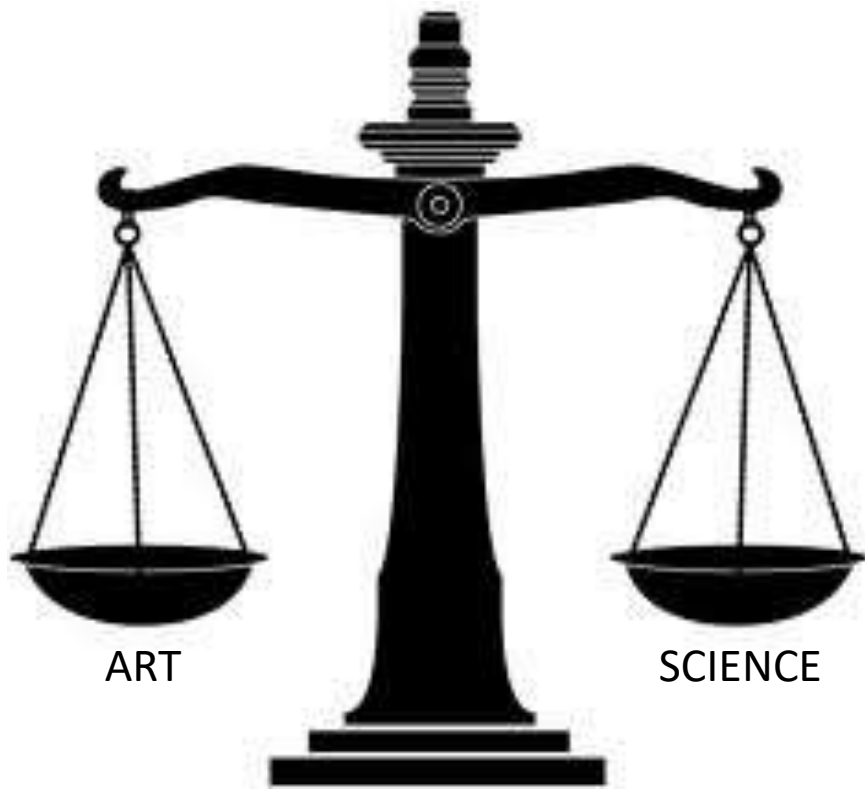
COMMUNICATING WITH CANCER PATIENTS

A Guide for Oncologists in Training

JOHN F SMYTH

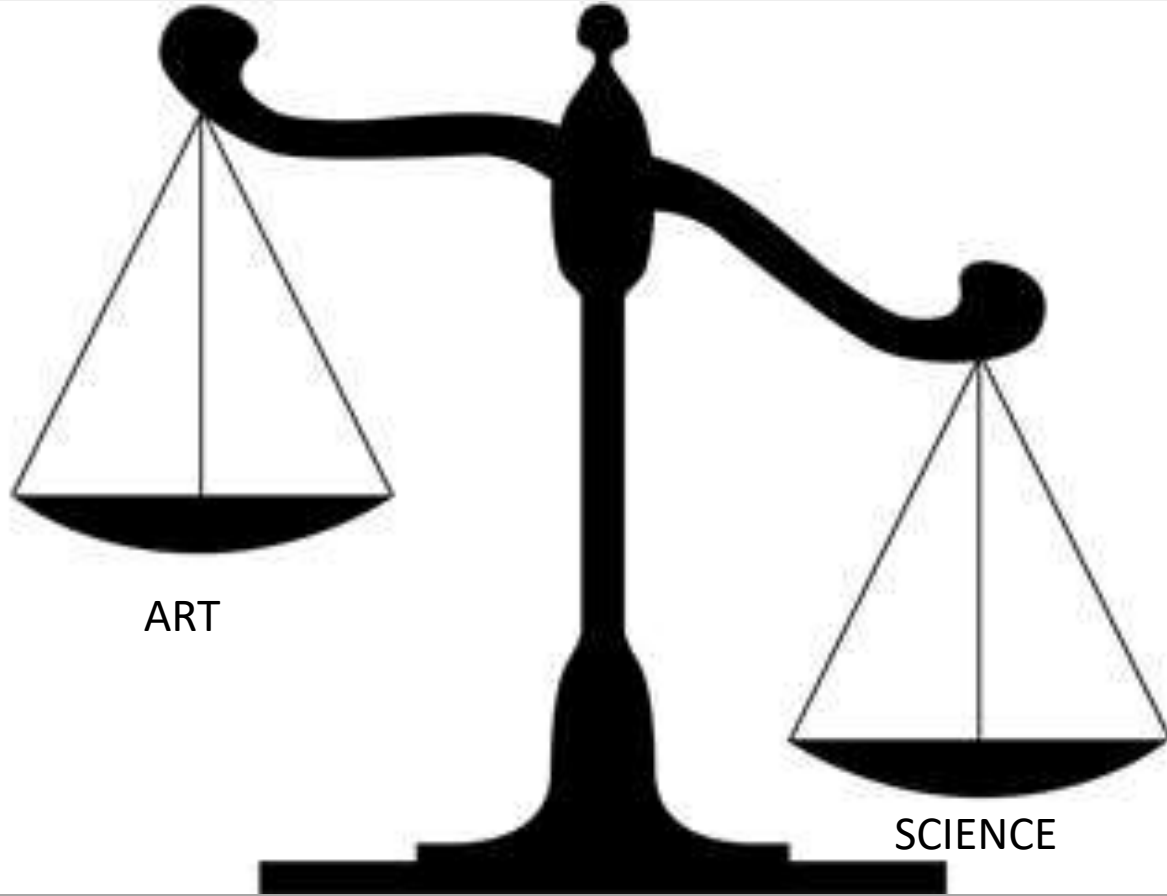
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ART

SCIENCE



ART

SCIENCE

The importance of communication

The Problem

1. Ever increasing scientific knowledge:

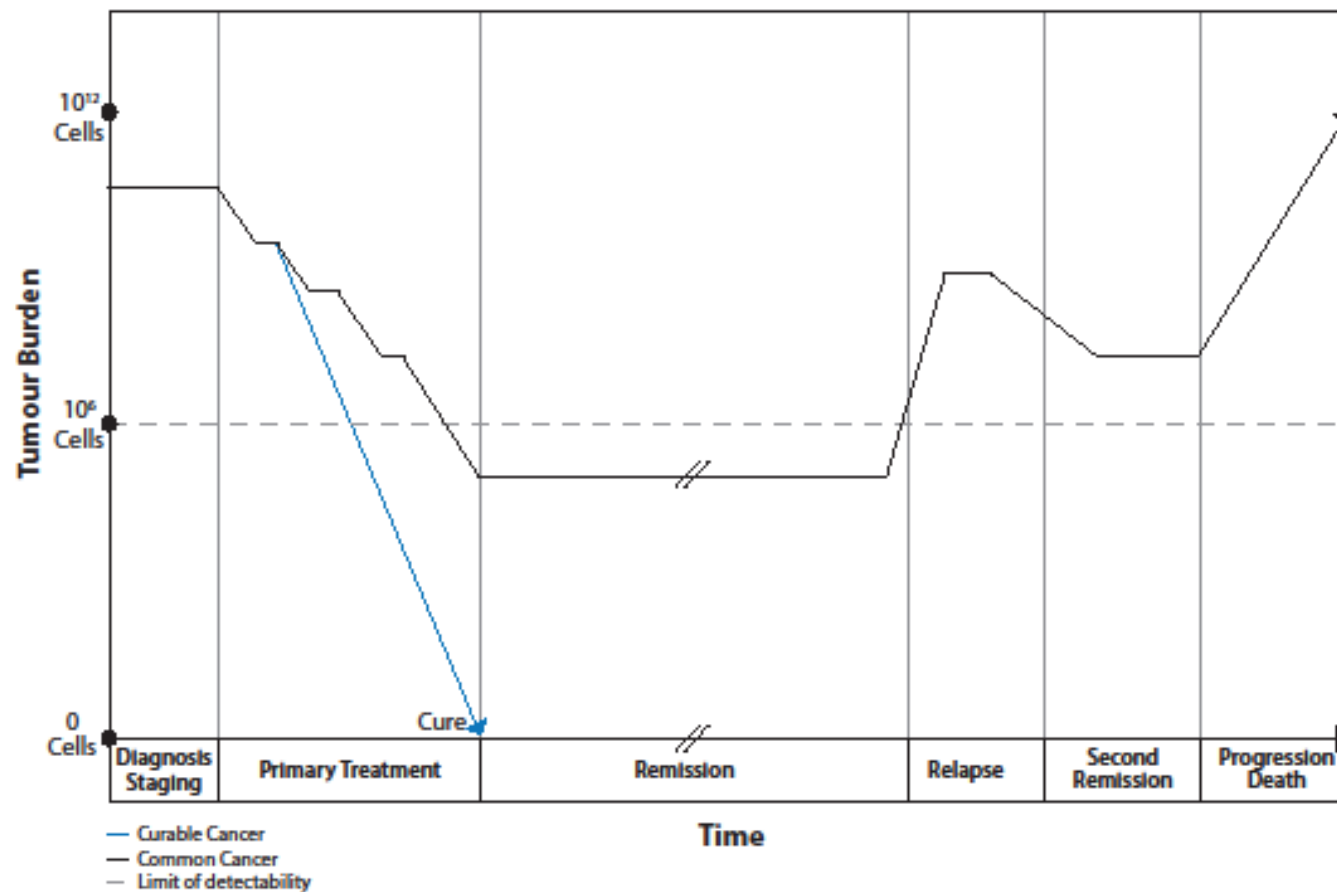
- Aetiology
- Presentation
- Management
- Prognosis

2. Ever increasing patients expectations and self acquired knowledge (web)

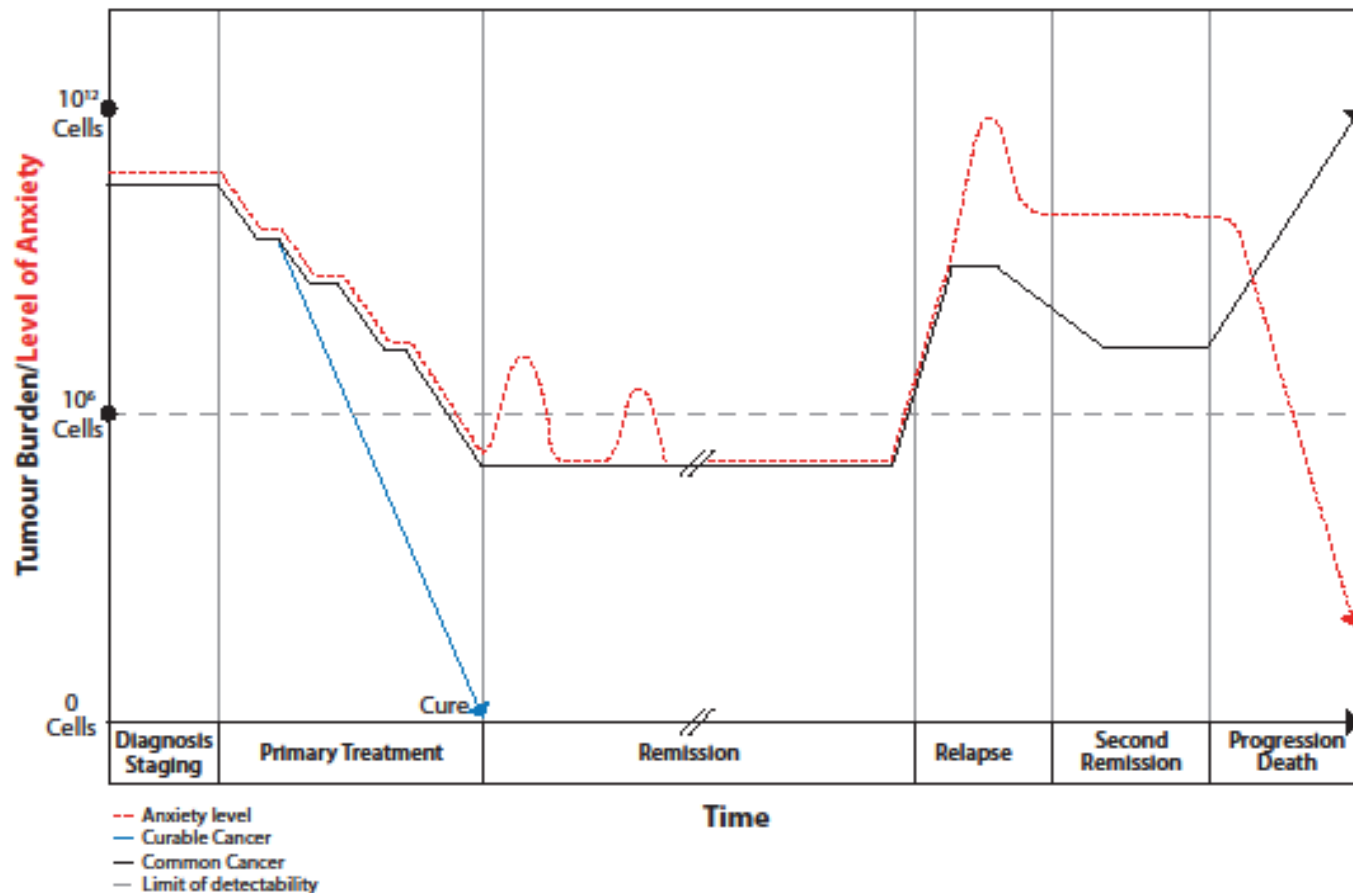
The Challenge - Communication

- **So much information to explain**
- **Too little time to TALK and LISTEN**

Tumour growth through different phases of disease management



Fluctuating levels of anxiety through different phases of disease management



Some Solutions

1. Plan consultation time
2. Share complex explanations with colleagues – especially nurses
3. Support conversations with hand-outs and appropriate websites
4. Monitor patients comprehension during and after treatment

New Patient Consultation

- Referral information
- Results of investigations to date
- History
- Examination
- Further investigations (staging)
- Possible treatments

Communication within the Context of Multidisciplinary Care

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Psychologists
- Patient Support Groups

Communicating About Follow-up

- Monitoring remission
- Survivorship issues
 - Fear of relapse
 - Exercise/diet/sex/work
 - Children and Dependents

Progression and Terminal Care

- When to introduce colleagues from palliative care
- Explain different objectives of this “chapter” in their book
- LISTEN to and understand specific anxieties

Some Solutions



Difficult Conversations

- Environment
- Tempo
- Language
- The importance of touch

Talking About Death

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Communicating About Research

- Knowledge of what is best vv Uncertainty
- Benefits vv Risks
- “Informed” Consent
- Family Pressures

Complementary and Alternative Medicine

- Discuss
- LISTEN
- Learn – potentially harmful factors
- Value of Integrative Oncology

Bereavement

Timing - 6 weeks and 6 months

Place - Somewhere new

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