

[Track 1: Introduction]

Narrator:

Welcome to “Living With Blood and Marrow Transplants.” This module is part of the Cancer Survival Toolbox®, an award-winning audio program brought to you by the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, or NCCS for short. The Cancer Survival Toolbox is a FREE set of self-learning programs developed by the NCCS along with the Association of Oncology Social Work (AOSW), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS). NCCS is the oldest survivor-led cancer advocacy organization in the United States, advocating for quality cancer care for all Americans and empowering cancer survivors to advocate for themselves. To order copies of the Cancer Survival Toolbox, call 877-NCCS-YES (877-622-7937) or visit the NCCS web site at <http://www.canceradvocacy.org/toolbox>.

Supported by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and written by cancer survivors and healthcare professionals, this program is designed to help people with blood cancer—such as leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma and myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS)—who may have or have had a transplant as part of their treatment. It describes tools that can improve your abilities to cope. This program can be used on its own or along with the other Cancer Survival Toolbox programs. For example, if you were found to have a blood cancer just a short time ago, you may want to listen to the Toolbox program, “First Steps for the Newly Diagnosed.” You can also refer to the resource booklet that comes with this CD for information from many other sources, including national transplant organizations.

But before we go further, let's discuss the term "cancer survivor." At NCCS, it's our view that any person diagnosed with cancer is a survivor—from the moment of diagnosis through the rest of his or her life. Of course, you can also use the term "patient." All through this program, we use the term "survivor" to mean anyone dealing with cancer, including the person with the disease, family members, and family and friends who are caregivers.

Let's hear from Daniel, a long-term bone marrow transplant survivor, who is now also an Oncology Nurse Practitioner.

Daniel: Hi, I'm Daniel, and I underwent a bone marrow transplant for chronic myelogenous leukemia (or CML) almost 14 years ago. It was because of my experience as a transplant patient I later went on to become an Oncology Nurse Practitioner, caring for blood and marrow transplant survivors like you and me. You'll hear more details about my story later in the program.

Over the past 14 years, I've seen incredible advancements in transplantation which have improved survival and quality of life for many of us. In 1996, when I received my transplant, outcomes were not nearly what they are today. While stem cell transplantation is no picnic, advances have reduced the complications that can occur. One of the most amazing things is we now see transplants available to those who once would not have been offered this life saving therapy. Older adults (50 years of age and older) can now benefit, whereas before only younger and healthy patients could receive transplants.

Transplant is one of the most aggressive forms of cancer therapy available. It is offered because it gives the recipient the best shot at long-term survival—and for some, hope of a cure.

In fact, there are so many long-term survivors now that a specialty field within oncology dedicated to survivorship has been created. Outcomes of blood and marrow transplantation have improved so much that we are now focused on the health needs and quality of life related to long-term survivors. The procedures do have risks, and individuals can develop complications such as the immune system rejecting the transplanted cells. But transplantation providers are experts in managing these complications should they develop. And remember: the majority of long-term survivors are doing very well after transplant, with good quality of life.

This program focuses on some of the physical and emotional issues related to transplants. But perhaps the best advice I can give you is to make sure you have a good support system in place if you plan to undergo a transplant. I found my transplant Social Worker, Psychologist, and Psychiatrist were as valuable as the Doctors and Nurses responsible for my physical care.