

cancer

patient information

More cancer patients and their loved ones are making decisions on what treatments to undergo based on the advice of friends and family. This is according to a study commissioned by the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology.

In 2003, just 7 percent of cancer patients made their treatment decision after talking to friends and family. In 2007, however, this number increased to 16 percent. The internet is also playing an increasingly larger role in the decision-making process, along with other media.

"It is common for patients to come in with a packet of materials they've gotten from the internet, or heard on radio or television, or seen in a magazine. Helping them sort this information is part of the radiation oncologist's role" says Charles H. Albrecht, MD, director of the Finger Lakes Radiation Oncology Center in Clifton Springs. He adds that "only a physician can determine whether this information is accurate and whether it applies in the patient's circumstances."

Patients who go online for information can visit www.rtanswers.org. The website has easy-to-read sections in English and Spanish. Since radiation therapy works to kill fast-growing cancer cells, the website explains how radiation works on different types of cancer and what patients can expect before, during and after treatment. The site also includes a doctor finder to help patients locate a radiation oncologist in their area.

Locally, beginning on June 4th and continuing through November, the American Cancer Society will be presenting monthly programs called "I Can Cope" on various aspects of living with a cancer diagnosis and treatment. Classes will be held at St. Thomas' Episcopal Church on Highland Ave in Rochester. Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 for more information.

