

TESTING TREATMENTS

Chapter 13, 13.7

AN ACTION PLAN – THINGS YOU CAN DO

Identify questions about the effects of treatment that are important to you.

Learn to recognize uncertainty; speak up; ask questions; seek honest answers.

Don't be afraid to ask your doctor what treatments are available; what may happen if you choose a particular treatment; AND what might happen if you don't.

When thinking about possible treatments, you may find the information on decision aids at www.ohri.ca/DecisionAid helpful. See also: Additional Resources (Do you want to know more about shared decision-making?)

Use reliable websites such as NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk). See: Chapter 12 and the *Additional Resources* section in this book.

Be a healthy sceptic about unfounded claims and media reports of treatment 'breakthroughs'; about the way that 'numbers' are reported in the media – especially large numbers in headline claims!

Challenge treatments offered to you or your family on the basis of beliefs and dogmas, but unsubstantiated by reliable evidence.

Be wary of unnecessary disease 'labelling' and over-investigation (see Chapters 2 and 4) – find out if the disease in question is considered high risk or low risk for you. Ask what would happen if nothing immediate is done.

Agree to participate in a clinical trial only on condition (i) that the study protocol has been registered and made publicly available (ii) that the protocol refers to systematic reviews of existing evidence showing that the trial is justified; and (iii) that you receive a written assurance that the full study results will be published, and sent to all participants who indicate that they wish to receive them.

Encourage and work with health professionals, researchers, research funders, and others who are trying to promote research addressing inadequately answered questions about the effects of treatment which you regard as important.

Encourage wider education about the effects of biases and the play of chance, and lobby your elected political representative and others about doing more to emphasize this in school curricula, beginning in primary schools.