

# Cancer in the Workplace

Workshop by Osara Health



AUGUST 4-7 • WASHINGTON, DC

# Speakers



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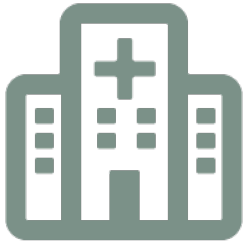
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# Agenda

1. Overview
  - a. Cancer and the Workplace:  
Why it Matters?
  - b. The Role of an Employer in  
Supporting Cancer Survivors
2. Case Studies
3. Questions & Answers



# Cancer and the Workplace: Why It Matters



Medical



Survivor



Workplace



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# Cancer & Work

In the United States, approximately, **45% of people** diagnosed with cancer are of a **prime working age** (between 20 – 64)<sup>1</sup>



# Cancer & Work continued



There has been rise of early onset cancers diagnosed in people younger than 50 years old <sup>2</sup>



The annual productivity loss among working age adults is between \$9.6 billion and \$16 billion <sup>3</sup>





# Not Just a Diagnosis

01

Physical

02

Mental,  
Social and  
Emotional  
Well-Being

03

Work and  
identity

04

Financial

05

Impact on  
relationships  
and family



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# Why Returning to Work After Cancer Matters

## Employee

- maintain roles and habits
- return to normalcy
- connection to workplace
- improved quality of life
- purpose and routine
- financial stability



cancer  
survivor(s)

## Employer

- reduce cost to insurer / employer
- create a culture of care and trust
- ensure compliance with employment laws
- retain talent



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# Barriers to Return to Work



**Barrier 1:**  
Medical  
Guidance



**Barrier 2:**  
Employer  
Support



**Barrier 3:**  
Financial and  
Insurance



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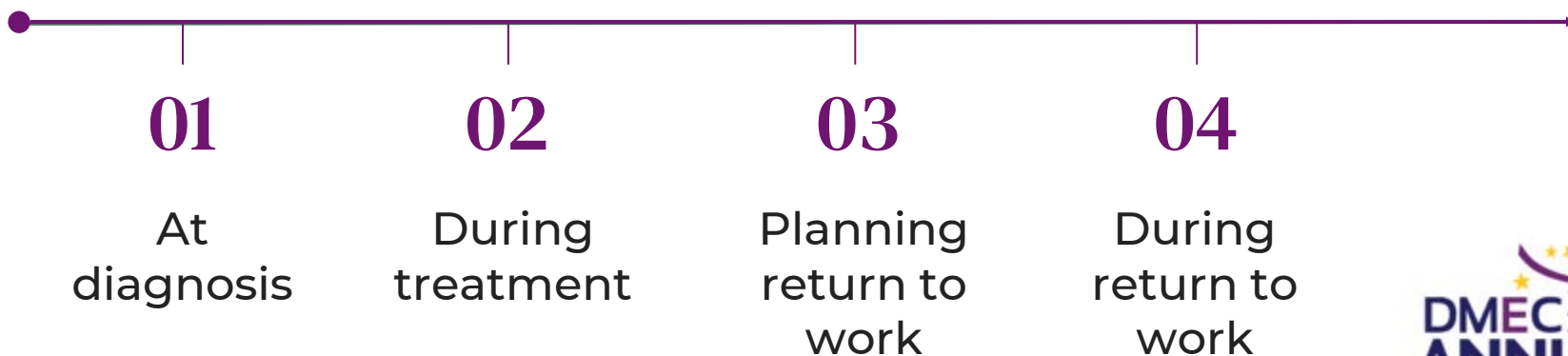
# Audience

## Q&A

What has been your experience supporting an employee diagnosed with cancer?

# Stages of Return to Work

- Consider an employee's return to work after cancer in these key timepoints.
- This process may follow a timeline, but it's not always linear.
- There are important considerations at each point in the timeline to consider.



# Case Study 1

# Meet Nikki



- 37 years old
- Single mother of a 5 year old son
- Primary carer for her ageing parents
- Car rental agent at airport

# Nikki's Diagnosis & Disclosure

- Diagnosed with Stage 3A breast cancer (ER+)
- She shared her diagnosis with her colleagues, as well as you (her manager)

When she tells you about her diagnosis she is upset and crying and said she is devastated at this life threatening illness and what may happen to her son



# Discussion Questions – Nikki's Diagnosis and Disclosure

1. How might you respond to Nikki following her disclosure and her initial fears?
2. What might you take away from this discussion with Nikki as a human resources professional and colleague?



# Nikki's Treatment

## Treatment plan:

Surgery (mastectomy), 2 weeks recovery

6 cycles of chemotherapy given over 4 months period

6 weeks of radiation therapy to neck and lymph nodes area

5- 10 years of estrogen suppressant medication (e.g. Tamoxifen)

**Work status:** Taking intermittent FMLA leave to manage surgery and treatment.



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# Nikki's Side Effects

## Physical:

- Chemotherapy induced peripheral neuropathy
- Self image/body image
- Pain
- Fatigue

## Cognitive:

- Difficulty concentrating and remembering information

## Psychological:

- Fear of future



# Discussion Questions – Nikki's Side Effects

1. What are ways we can be supportive when employees are having treatment and not at work?

# Planning Nikki's Return to Work

## Request to Return to Work:

During chemotherapy  
Nikki experiences  
financial challenges and  
needs to return to work.

**This is the time to  
consider reasonable  
accommodations.**



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# Planning Nikki's Return to Work

## Functional challenges:

- Reduced upper extremity function
- Neuropathy in both feet
- Self-image/body image
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering information
- Fear of future and if the treatment will be successful

## Job Duties:

- Customer service
- Preparing documents, accounts and other documentation
- Processing payments
- Taking phone calls and explaining terms and conditions
- Driving vehicles
- Cleaning vehicles



# Reasonable Accommodations

- Graded return to hours of work (reduced hours of work - less busy hours)
- Graded return to duties
- Change to alternate location that is less busy
- Alternate tasks - work from home to do documentation processing, phone based customer service
- Intermittent rest breaks
- Ergonomic equipment to support upper extremity affected by lymphedema and peripheral neuropathy



# Reasonable Accommodations continued

- Modified equipment for car cleaning
- Hands free phone (speaker phone)
- Checklists of tasks on work desk
- Assistive technology for task reminders, deadlines and instructions
- Appropriate footwear
- Seating options
- Anti-fatigue matting



# Case Study 2



# Meet Mark



- 48 years old
- Husband and father of 2 daughters
- Works full time as an Accountant

# Mark's Diagnosis & Disclosure

- Diagnosed with Stage III colorectal cancer
  - He shared his diagnosis with his colleagues, as well as the director and HR
- He is scared, and worried about caring for and being present for his family
  - He is worried about not being able to work at his full capacity



# Mark's Treatment

Surgery (colectomy/colostomy)  
with 8 week recovery period

Chemotherapy

2 cycles over 6 months

Mark took 8 weeks leave for surgery  
and recovery; chemotherapy will  
start every 2 weeks afterward.

He wants to keep working during  
chemotherapy for normalcy and  
financial reasons.

**Work status:** Despite  
efforts to work full time in the  
office, he is struggling and  
seeks support to find a  
feasible work arrangement  
during treatment



# Mark's Side Effects

Side effects  
during  
chemotherapy

## Physical:

- Fatigue
- Pain

## Cognitive:

- Trouble concentrating
- Slower processing

## Psychological:

- Anxiety
- Feelings of isolation



# Discussion Questions - Mark

1. How might he and his employer discuss workplace accommodations?
2. What type of accommodations could his employer make?

# Planning Mark's Return to Work

## **Job Duties:**

- Preparing tax returns and other financial documents
- Interpreting financial documents
- Preparing and examines financial records
- His job requires a high level of attention to detail, focus and physical and cognitive endurance

## **Reasonable Accommodations:**

- Remote work: home office set up near bathroom
- Hands free phone (speaker phone)
- Intermittent rest breaks
- Quiet environment, distraction reduced
- Noise cancellation headphones



# Discussion Questions

## Long Term Needs of Survivors

1. How do you support employees in the long term?
2. How do you navigate long term side effects or late effects of treatment at work?
3. How do you evaluate evolving needs of survivors at work?

**Q&A**



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