

# action

## ACCC Launches Metastatic Breast Cancer Education Project

**A**n estimated 150,000 to 250,000 women in the U.S. are currently living with metastatic breast cancer—an incurable condition. These individuals have few treatment options, and their median survival is three years. In fact, the number of women dying from metastatic breast cancer has remained steady at about 40,000 annually since the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> While breast cancer is a high-profile disease, receiving significant private and public research funding and focused awareness and prevention initiatives, patients with metastatic breast cancer face unique challenges. According to the Metastatic Breast Cancer (MBC) Alliance “public messaging about the [breast cancer] ‘cure’ and survivorship is so pervasive that people diagnosed at stage IV with metastatic breast cancer can be stigmatized by the perception that they’ve failed to take care of themselves or undergo annual screening.”<sup>2</sup> In addition, many metastatic breast cancer patients



face a number of communication challenges, including:

- A perception that their cancer is curable, driven in part by a low-level of engagement during conversations with providers
- Providers who use overly vague or overly technical medical language
- Providers who may “minimize” the severity of the disease, perhaps in efforts to reduce patient distress or help patients stay positive, engaged, and compliant with treatment recommendations.

### Project Deliverables


With this education project, ACCC seeks to address these challenges. Specific project goals: 1) to expand the current breast cancer conversation to address gaps between early and metastatic disease and 2) to improve the treatment and management of metastatic breast cancer in the community setting. Project deliverables include:

- An environmental scan of the current state of metastatic breast cancer treatment and patient management
- Site visits to programs that exhibit effective practices in metastatic breast cancer treatment and patient management
- Access to Cancer Support Community’s Cancer Experience Registry: Metastatic Breast Cancer
- Education materials geared towards the multidisciplinary cancer care team
- A project-specific webpage and app

- A workbook to educate members of the multidisciplinary cancer care team about effective practices for this unique patient population.
- And—in 2017—development of operational pathways to help ACCC member programs improve the treatment and management of individuals with metastatic breast cancer.

### A Call to Action

If your cancer center has strong support programs in place to meet the unique needs of metastatic breast cancer patients, or if you would like to participate in the development of effective practices and operational pathways to improve the management and treatment of this patient population, email [mgandee@accc-cancer.org](mailto:mgandee@accc-cancer.org). Be a part of effecting positive change today!

ACCC is pleased to partner with the MBC Alliance ([mbcalliance.org](http://mbcalliance.org)) and the Cancer Support Community ([cancersupportcommunity.org](http://cancersupportcommunity.org)) on this education project. Stay tuned for more information! 

### References

1. Westervelt A. Researchers take aim at metastatic breast cancer. The Wall Street Journal. Feb. 5, 2016. Available online at: [wsj.com/articles/researchers-take-aim-at-metastatic-breast-cancer-1455592266/](http://wsj.com/articles/researchers-take-aim-at-metastatic-breast-cancer-1455592266/).
2. MBC Alliance. Changing the Landscape for People Living with Metastatic Breast Cancer. Metastatic Breast Cancer Landscape Analysis: Research Report, October 2014. Available online at: [mbcalliance.org/research/landscape-analysis](http://mbcalliance.org/research/landscape-analysis).