

# Patients want honesty, compassion from their doctor

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Not exactly news to cancer patients, but results released today found that what patients want most out of their oncologist is honesty and compassion.

The study results were released at the annual meeting of ASTRO (American Society for Radiation Oncology), the professional organization of radiation oncologists ([read abstract](#)). And while most of the presentations during ASTRO focused on treatment, symptom management, and long-term effects, the study also showcased the medical community's desire to improve behavior and relationships to better impact treatment and quality of life.

The study involved more than 500 prostate, breast, and lung cancer patients at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute's Department of Radiation Oncology. Patients completed surveys about their preferences of their radiation oncologist--during the initial consultation, halfway during radiation treatment, and at the end of treatment.

After the initial consultation, half of the patients' doctors reviewed the first survey, and possibly adjusted their behavior to meet the needs and desires of their patients. So, what did patients want most from their radiation oncologist? Most wanted to be called by their first name. And almost all (95 percent) wanted their oncologist to just be honest with them. Another interesting finding was that more than a third of female patients want to have their hands held during important office visits.

Patients were asked to take a satisfaction survey after treatment was completed, which showed satisfaction was very high and not significantly affected by whether the physician knew the patient's preferences.

This study may reinforce what patients have known for years, but the medical community is just now addressing--the importance of a strong patient-doctor relationship. Researchers hope the study will encourage oncologists to work on their patient relationships, which will ultimately improve patient care.

To read more on patient-doctor relationships, read *CURE*'s article, "[Power to the Patient](#)."