Patient-Doctor Communications/The Spouse-Partner in Disease Management

The Spouse-Partner in Disease Management

Ms. Diane Johnson

My husband was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1996. When a patient is diagnosed, the first thing he does is gather information by reading and talking with others. We found it important to go to someplace that was nurturing, be it listening to music, hiking, swimming, or shopping. We were unsure where to start in making our plan. A good plan for self advocacy includes: confronting prostate cancer as a chronic disease to live with rather than die from; identifying a patient representative, the spouse, a child, a neighbor, a friend, to write down things that the doctor says, keeping lists of questions and medications; building a team of clinicians possibly to include urologists, oncologists, a nutritionist, a trainer, a pain management specialist, a sleep specialist, and a pharmacist; and demanding excellent customer service, i.e., bedside manner, and getting all questions answered. My husband died in 1998, but while he was on the journey, he received the best possible care, while his anxiety had been assuaged and he was treated with respect.