



Cancer Email Groups (Listservs)

Patient Education Resource Center (PERC)

Information Guide

What are Email Groups?

- Listservs are electronic discussion groups that focus on particular topics. Email users that subscribe to the list may read all the messages that are sent by other members, and any messages that they send to the group are read by all other subscribers.
- There are over one hundred email groups discussing issues relating to cancer. Most of them are devoted to specific cancer types, but others revolve around issues, such as survivorship, coping, caregiving etc.
- The Association of Cancer Online Resources (www.acor.org) hosts the majority of cancer email groups. The rest hosted by a number of other different agencies/individuals.
- The ACOR lists are not moderated, however they are monitored to ensure that the posting rules are kept. ACOR forbids commercial solicitations and inflammatory messages.

How to locate cancer email groups?

- Access www.acor.org and click on "Mailing Lists" to find a database of all lists hosted on the site.
- Oncolink.com offers an automated subscription service to all the groups hosted by ACOR, as well as other cancer organizations. To access the automatic subscriber go to www.oncolink.com
 - Click on: "Coping with Cancer"
 - Click on: "Support"
 - Click on: "Support Groups and Information Resources"
 - Click on: "Listserv and Email Discussion Lists "

The purpose of this information guide is to direct patients and health care professionals to sources of information on cancer and related topics, it does not constitute an endorsement of the information contained in the resources. This list is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather to provide starting points for Information seeking.

All listed materials can be found at the Patient Education Resource Center of the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center in room B1-361. An online version of this document can be found at:
<http://www.cancer.med.umich.edu/learn/percpathways.htm>

Why join a email discussion group?

- Email groups provide an easy and direct way to connect with other people coping with similar issues and circumstances. They are a good source in which to learn coping strategies with both the physical and psychological aspects of cancer.
- Physical support groups meet on specific time intervals in specific geographic locations. In contrast, electronic discussion groups operate around the clock and are accessible to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection.

Issues to consider before subscribing to an email group (listserv)

- Keep in mind that the information exchanged on email groups is anecdotal, it is not scientifically proven. Please check the accuracy of the information with your physician prior to making any decisions on medical treatment.
- Do not compare yourself or your loved one to other patients discussed on the list. Every cancer patient has a unique situation and a different set of circumstances.
- Just like support groups, email discussion groups are not for everyone. Some messages may be discouraging or upsetting.
- The volume of messages received from the email group may be overwhelming. Some lists have over 1000 members. One way to handle the volume of messages on an email group is possible to subscribe to "digest mode". With this mode you get only one message from the list each day - this "digest" contains all of the list's mail for the day. The total volume of information isn't reduced but the number of messages is. It is also possible to temporarily suspend the subscription and reset it again.

This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.

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