

NURSE NAVIGATORS' GUIDE THROUGH THE METASTATIC BREAST CANCER JOURNEY

This navigation tool is intended to assist nurse navigators in supporting patients through their metastatic breast cancer (mBC) journey. This resource illustrates common mBC journey milestones, treatment considerations, and navigation touchpoints along the cancer continuum.

This is not a substitute for your own professional judgement.

BEGIN

1. Suspicious Finding/New Symptom Occurrence

- Recurrent metastatic breast cancer (rmBC)
- De novo* or new metastatic breast cancer (dnmBC)

2. Diagnostic Workup

- Imaging (eg, mammogram, ultrasound, MRI, CT, PET, bone scan)¹
- Genetic testing (if patient has a personal history of breast cancer or meets criteria)²
Germline testing and molecular biomarker testing of homologous recombination repair mutations, such as BRCA1, BRCA2, etc, and mismatch repair mutations
- Tissue biopsy (human receptor [HR] and human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 [HER2] status, biomarker testing of tumor proteins)³

Nurse Navigator Considerations:

- Assess health, culture, and language literacy
- Obtain previous diagnostic results and treatment plan (rmBC)
- Maintain current knowledge of genomic testing options, vendor portals, and patient test results
- Encourage patient support system to attend appointments
- Assess family cancer history and recommend genetic counseling if high risk for hereditary breast cancer (dnmBC)³
- Assess for genetic testing qualifications and facilitate testing accordingly
- Facilitate referrals and educate on biomarker testing
- Reinforce education on imaging findings and reason for tissue biopsy
- Review types of biopsies (fine needle aspiration, core needle, surgical, lymph node) and what to expect before, during, and after⁴
- Educate on biomarkers and their treatment implications
- Review types of hormone receptors (HR-positive, HR-negative, HER2-positive, HER2-negative, triple-negative breast cancer) and next steps

3. Staging

- Consideration of clinical/pathological features, biomarker analysis, imaging test results, etc

Nurse Navigator Considerations:

- Provide patient education specific to cancer staging (*tumor size, lymph node status, and spread to distant sites*)¹
- Assess patient's understanding of their own diagnosis and stage
- Reassure patient that there is available treatment for all stages of breast cancer (early, locally advanced, and metastatic)
- Acknowledge emotional stress related to staging and provide support

4. MDT Involvement³

- The multidisciplinary approach to mBC management involves a number of team members with various responsibilities
- Continued care with previously established team (rmBC)
- Establishment of care team (dnmBC)

Nurse Navigator Considerations:

- Educate on treatment options and modalities
- Communicate with multidisciplinary team (MDT) regarding patient diagnostic workup and results
- Attend multidisciplinary tumor boards

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5. mBC Treatment Plan Options/Management

- Surgery (in rare cases)³
- Palliative radiation³
- Ovarian ablation therapy⁵
- Targeted therapy
- Inhibitors⁵
- Chemotherapy³
- Hormone therapy³
- Immunotherapy⁵
- Bone-targeted therapy³
- Clinical trials³
- Medical supportive care for breast cancer-related symptoms
 - Fatigue, bone/joint health, lymphedema, anxiety/depression, sleep difficulties³

Nurse Navigator Considerations:

- Assess patient's understanding of their prognosis and expected treatment plan
- Determine past treatment plan/treatment experiences and re-educate on changing therapies (rmBC)
- Re-educate on how treatment options may have changed since last treatment
- Encourage patients to participate in the treatment decision-making process⁵
- Assess for barriers to care and provide resources and support throughout continuum
- Manage treatment expectations and reinforce treatment plan
- Educate on side effects and encourage patients to follow-up with their care team
- Assess if patient meets criteria for clinical trial and educate on clinical trial process if applicable
- Assess for side effects throughout treatment and report accordingly
- Discuss medical supportive care modalities and refer as indicated
- Provide education on the role of supportive/palliative care and oncology rehabilitation to preserve and restore quality of life
- Assess health maintenance and bone health
- Provide information and resources for cosmetic coverings and postoperative garments as indicated

8. Hospice/EOL Care³

- Appropriate when life expectancy for mBC is <6 months

Nurse Navigator Considerations:

- Identify cultural differences and provide culturally appropriate support for patient/family
- Provide emotional support for the patient and loved ones
- Explain the difference between palliative and hospice care
- Respect the goals and needs of the patient and allow for shared decision-making during end-of-life (EOL)³
- Facilitate a smooth transition from treatment to hospice/EOL³
- Provide local resources for end-of-life (EOL) details such as legal work (pro bono if needed), accountants, funeral directors, and hospice services³
- Educate patient and family on signs and symptoms of EOL

6. Supportive Care⁶

- Financial
- Psychosocial
- Sexual health
- Social work
- Smoking cessation
- Nutritional
- Physical activity/oncology rehabilitation
- Immunizations
- Genetic counseling
- Spiritual
- Patient/caregiver support

Nurse Navigator Considerations:

- Assess treatment side effects and breast cancer symptoms throughout the continuum
- Refer to wound care (i.e., fungating breast tumor)
- Facilitate referrals to specialists as early as possible to address symptoms
- Normalize and provide emotional support for dealing with symptoms and increased anxiety
- Promote healthy lifestyle (ie, mental, physical, and sexual health)
- Encourage patient to continue recommended follow-up
- Facilitate referral for financial assistance information

7. Ongoing Monitoring⁵

- Follow-up visits and tests to evaluate treatment response and tolerability
 - Routine blood tests evaluate treatment response and tolerability
 - Imaging

Nurse Navigator Considerations:

- Review estimated follow-up and testing frequency
- Educate patient to be aware of and report any new or persistent health symptoms or side effects
- Provide advocacy and support resources for living with mBC (eg, returning to work)

For more resources,
scan the QR code



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This resource is for reference purposes only, and not comprehensive for all patients and all circumstances.

References

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