Positive Attitude a Key to Health and Happiness after Cancer

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A positive attitude while being treated for cancer of the head and neck may help patients live longer lives, delegates to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons’ (RACS) New Zealand Annual Scientific Meeting have been told.

The research, presented by Professor Randall Morton, asked patients to rate their own quality of life while receiving on-going treatment for head and neck cancer.

The results showed that those patients who were positive about their quality of life were much more likely to live longer lives.

Professor Morton, an Auckland Otolaryngologist and Chair of the RACS New Zealand National Board, said that patients’ perception of their situation played a central role in how they rated their quality of life.

“One’s perceived quality of life very much relies on an individual’s hopes, desires and expectations, and will vary from patient to patient and over time,” Prof Morton said.

“What we have found is that patients who have realistic expectations and are positive about their situation report that they have a higher quality of life and have been found to subsequently live longer.

“On the other hand, patients who use negative coping strategies such as substance use, and self-blame perceive their quality of life to be much lower,” he said.

Professor Morton proposed that the inclusion of a psychologist in the multi-disciplinary team treating cancer of the head and neck, would mean that a patient’s psycho-social well-being could be more readily supported.

The Annual Scientific Meeting, titled SURGERY 2015: I Can – BUT Should I? Choosing Wisely, is being held in Queenstown from Thursday 13 to Friday 14 August and focuses on the future of healthcare in New Zealand through the challenges surrounding access to surgery and the best use of surgical resources.

ABOUT RACS
RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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