Distress Screening for Cancer Patients

The Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center (LSCVAMC) has begun to ask veterans diagnosed with cancer to fill out a distress screen at certain medical visits. Patients undergoing treatment for cancer likely have specific concerns. The distress screen helps the cancer care team understand the distress patients are feeling and how it effects their care.

The distress screen is like a pain scale. It helps to measure distress. The distress screen has a scale on which you circle your level of distress. It also asks about the specific areas that are of concern. A sample of the distress screen is located below.

After completing the distress screen, the veteran may meet with a provider for further evaluation and may be referred for supportive services at the LSCVAMC or in the community. Supportive services can include social workers, behavioral health professionals, chaplains, support groups, and other experts.

If you should have any questions about distress screening for cancer patients, contact Deborah Fox at (216) 791-3800 ext. 6545 or e-mail deborah.fox2@va.gov.
The Cancer Committee at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center (LSCVAMC) makes sure that patients treated at the medical center receive care according to nationally recognized measures. As a Commission on Cancer (CoC) accredited cancer program, the LSCVAMC uses the CoC quality reporting tools to assess and monitor performance rates for select cancer treatments. Below is a summary of the LSCVAMC performance rate for the colorectal cancer quality measures.

Measure 1: Adjuvant chemotherapy (chemotherapy given after colon cancer surgery) is considered or administered within four months of diagnosis for patients under age 80 with Stage III colon cancer. The LSCVAMC’s performance rate was 100% from 2010 to 2011 for this CoC standard of care quality measure. The expected performance rate is 90%.

Measure 2: At least 12 regional lymph nodes are removed and pathologically examined for resected colon cancer. The LSCVAMC’s performance rate was 85.7% from 2010 to 2011 for this CoC standard of quality measure. The expected performance rate is 80%. Although we exceeded the expected performance rate, the Cancer Committee’s goal is to achieve 100% for this measure. The Cancer Committee reviews all colon cancer resections to make sure that at least 12 lymph nodes are examined.

Measure 3: Radiation therapy is considered or administered within six months of diagnosis for patients under the age of 80 with Stage III receiving surgical resection for rectal cancer. The LSCVAMC’s performance rate was 100% from 2010 to 2011 for this CoC standard of quality measure. There is no expected performance rate for this measure.