

Lymphoma Research Foundation Launches Awesome Mobile App

By: Ross Bonander / September 17, 2013

The most important name in lymphoma-specific research and patient support has released the best mobile app to date for patients with lymphoma and/or their caregivers. It's free and, at least on the iPad, it is a winner.

The Lymphoma Research Foundation has launched "Focus on Lymphoma", a dynamite, user-friendly app populated with the kinds of nuances made possible only by first talking to many, many patients-- and really listening to them

The fact of the matter is, either you need this app—because you have some connection to lymphoma—or you don't. It won't be very helpful to patients with diagnoses other than a Hodgkin's or a non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Also, it's free. And so far, no evidence of any in-app purchase garbage.

With that in mind, I'm simply going to itemize some of the appealing features of "Focus on Lymphoma", which I was able to find at the Apple App store simply by entering 'Focus on Lymphoma' in the search field. It's also available for Android devices on Google Play.

Focus On Lymphoma: The App

- **Cancer defined.** The section 'Lymphoma Basics' answers the question "What is Cancer" as cleanly and succinctly as I have ever seen the term defined in any extended fashion.
- **Results tracking.** Patients can track blood test results, symptoms, and medication schedules.
- **Voice recorder.** Record your doctor's appointment straight into the app for easy reference later when you can't quite remember what he or she told you.
- **Personalization.** Edit your profile to tailor the app to your subtype and stage. Doing so redirects more pertinent information your way. This is possible for patients, caregivers, and even researchers to use.
- **Radioimmunotherapy.** Stephanie Gregory, MD, head of hematology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago and Director of the Lymphoma program appears in a video to explain radioimmunotherapy (RIT). She ends up making a very convincing case for its use. Anyone who watches that video, and doesn't wonder how on earth Bexxar was allowed to die, or how on earth Zevalin is allowed to be on its death bed, wasn't paying attention.
- **Handy margin tabs.** Each page offers three tabs on the far right margin, allowing the user to send an email to the LRF, to email the article they're reading at the moment, and the best tab, "Add Questions to



Dr. Sessions." This tab allows the user to quickly jot down notes and questions they want to discuss with their health care provider.

- **Use.** The app is incredibly easy to use and kudos to the writing and editorial team because the text is crisp and to the point.

- **Patient testimonials.** When I saw these 'Stories of Hope' I groaned because nothing ruins reliable medical information more quickly than an anecdote that may or may not be true given by a person who may or may not be real. Reading them changed my mind, mostly. Ultimately each is in the service of the LRF but that's expected. They contain lots of detailed information through the stories of folks diagnosed with mantle cell lymphoma, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, T-cell lymphoblastic lymphoma, a non-specified peripheral T-cell lymphoma, anaplastic large (T-cell) lymphoma, and follicular lymphoma (curiously, they tabbed in a man in his 30s-hardly representative of that patient population). These lead me to the next criticism.

- **Second opinions.** I think the LRF got a little spineless in the section on getting a second opinion. Although they include some good practical information about second opinions, I'm a little disappointed they didn't stress the issue more, especially when some renowned lymphoma experts, such as Dr. James Armitage, have gone on record saying they won't treat lymphoma patients who have not gotten one, and especially when a good number of the 'stories of hope' begin with a misdiagnosis.

- **Covering all the bases.** This app discusses every treatment option, clinical trials, financial considerations, tips on getting through to your doctor, explanations of lab tests and lab results and why they're ordered, advanced directives, LRF programs like patient matching, and much, much more. Surely the creators left a stone or two unturned, I just haven't quite found them yet.

Remembering

The incredible functionality of this app reminds me of a young man who used to go to the non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma support groups at supportgroups.com. He had been diagnosed with Burkitt's lymphoma, perhaps the most aggressive cancer known in medicine. He worked as a project manager for a sub-contractor. He didn't post too much on the site, but when he did, I remember him talking about how he planned to approach his disease like any other project, using tracking devices and other tools to monitor his progress.

Unfortunately he had been diagnosed with advanced disease and was quickly overwhelmed by Burkitt's. We learned well after the fact that he had died. Still, I loved his idea of approaching a cancer diagnosis like a project that demanded a serious commitment to organization. And he's the first person I thought of when I heard of this app, because cancer management requires cancer commitment, and "Focus on Lymphoma" puts that capability squarely onto your mobile device better than anything that has been offered before.

To find out more about this app, visit www.focusonlymphoma.org.