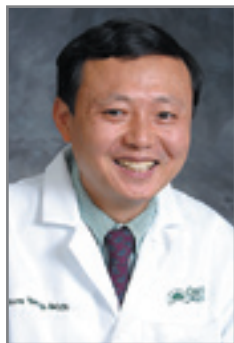


Treating cancer in the senior population

Florida Cancer Institute

Thomas H. Tang, MD



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- Board certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine, with subspecialty certification in medical oncology and hematology
- Fellowship, medical oncology and Hematology, New York University Medical Center/ Kaplan Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Medical degree, West China University of Medical Sciences, People's Republic of China and the University of Geneva, Faculty of Medicine, Switzerland
- Internal medicine residency, Lenox Hill Hospital, New York City

Cancer is a common diagnosis for seniors and is the leading cause of death in the senior population, which makes it quite a challenge, observes Thomas H. Tang, MD, of Florida Cancer Institute.

"About half of all new cancer patients nationwide are over 65 years of age," he explains, "and most patients who come into our offices — about 80 percent — are seniors. The most common cancers are breast, lung, and colon cancer, and the treatments we offer for them may include chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery."

The concerns are different for a senior patient than for a younger patient, says Dr. Tang. "When a younger patient comes into our office, we are usually able to perform a straightforward treatment program. In a senior patient, there are frequently specific other conditions for which they are being treated.

"One of the first things we have to consider in the case of senior patients is their projected life expectancy. There is a major difference between our approach

to a 60-something-year-old cancer patient and a patient in their 90s. Sometimes a patient's life expectancy is shorter than the natural history of the disease, particularly in slow-growing prostate malignancies, for ex-



The staff of Florida Cancer Institute has the experience and expertise to treat all aspects of cancer among seniors.

ample. If life expectancy is short, and it's unlikely that a patient will die from cancer, we may work more toward alleviating pain than trying to eliminate the disease through chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery.

"Another factor we have to consider is how well the patient can function," he continues. "We

use a common-sense approach: Can the patient drive? Can they take care of themselves? Are they bed-bound? What other comorbidities, or serious medical conditions, does the patient have?

"Also, we want to know their nutritional status, mental status, and medication regimen. Certain medications can interfere with treatment. We spend a great deal of time thoroughly reviewing the medications, because of the potential interactions between medications and chemotherapy, for example. That is a large component of what we have to do initially.

"Some people in the senior population suffer from dementia or depression. Is the patient socially isolated, or do they have a good support system around? These are all things we must consider. If the patient can function independently, it is much easier for us to treat them."

Because the staff of Florida Cancer Institute treats so many senior patients, everyone on the staff — from the doctors to the nurses — is highly experienced with the important aspects of geriatric care.

"Everyone knows all of the factors that need to be considered and that might affect the

patient's treatment," assures Dr. Tang. "We take every aspect of the patient's lives into consideration, including social setting. In a large institution where the staff is less experienced in working with the senior population, that might not be the case. We know that if the patient has problems in addition to their cancer, we can pick up on them easily here." *FHCN—Michael J. Sabno*

Leading the charge against cancer ...

Dr. Tang welcomes calls from those interested in learning more about new cancer treatment and related topics. For further information, please call (352) 596-1926. Florida Cancer Institute is located at 7154 Medical Center Dr. in Spring Hill.

Yes! Please send me information about cancer treatment.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

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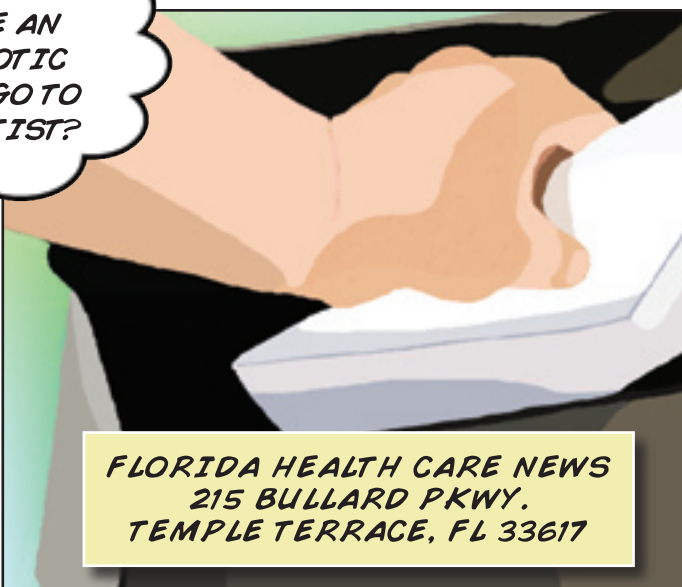
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Mail to: Florida Cancer Institute, P.O. Box 5562, Spring Hill, FL 34611 Attn: Vince Vanni

The Staff of FCI invite you to visit them on the Web at www.floridacancerinstitute.us

ASK THE EXPERT...



The doctors and other health care providers featured in this publication present a variety of interesting health-related topics. Sometimes our readers write to us or call with questions not addressed in a particular issue of the paper. Florida Health Care News has assembled a network of health care providers throughout the state who will be assisting in answering your individual questions.

If you have a health-care related question you would like to have answered, please mail it to:

**Florida Health Care News
215 Bullard Parkway
Temple Terrace, FL 33617**

Questions can also be e-mailed to: fleditor@tampabay.rr.com. Please place "Ask the Expert Question" in the subject line.

Please include your name, address, and phone number so either we or the health-care provider can contact you if further clarification of your question is required. In all cases, if you would like to have your name withheld for publication, please indicate so when submitting your question.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Due to space limitations, not all questions can be answered immediately.