

MED 275: From Diagnosis to Dialogue: A Doctor's Real-Time Battle with Cancer

Course Description

Dr. Bryant Lin, MD, Co-Founder and Co-Director of Stanford CARE, and Clinical Professor at Stanford Medicine, shares his first-person perspective on receiving a diagnosis of Stage 4 “Never Smoker” lung cancer in May 2024, which has metastasized (spread) to his brain, liver, and bones. The course will feature Dr. Lin's personal experiences along with weekly talks from leading Stanford cancer clinicians and researchers. Topics will include cancer screening, diagnostics, caregiving, policy, therapy, and spiritual care, offering students a unique opportunity to learn about advanced-stage cancer from both patient and physician perspectives in real time. Students from all degree programs are welcome to enroll.

Teaching Team

- **Instructor:** Bryant Lin (bylin@stanford.edu)
- **TAs:** Longsha Liu (lsliu@stanford.edu), Richard Liang (liangr@stanford.edu), Steven Truong (sdtruong@stanford.edu)

Course Organization

- **Schedule:** Autumn 2024 Wednesdays, 12:30 PM - 1:20 PM Pacific Time
- **Location:** Varies - Please check schedule below; LK308, Alway M112 or M114, in person

Course Requirements and Passing Criteria

To pass the course, students are required to:

1. **Attendance:** Attend at least 8 out of the 10 sessions.
2. **Participation:** Demonstrate active engagement and professionalism in weekly class discussions.
3. **Pre-Class Preparation:** Review any pre-reading materials and come prepared with questions related to the weekly topic.
4. **Assignments: (70% completion required for passing)**
 - a. Before each session: Submit at least one question related to the weekly topic.
 - b. After each session: Provide a one-paragraph reflection on what was learned from the week's session.
 - c. Final Reflection: Submit a one-page reflection synthesizing your overall experience and learning from the course, focusing on key takeaways, personal impact, and how the course has shaped your views on cancer care.

Full engagement, professionalism, and timely submission of deliverables are essential. Please notify the teaching team in advance if you anticipate any absences.

SCHEDULE:

Week 1: 9/25: LK 308

Week 2: 10/2: Alway M112

Week 3: 10/9: LK 308

Week 4: 10/16: LK 308

Week 5: 10/23: [3rd Floor Library, Stanford Hospital, 500 Pasteur](#)

Week 6: 10/30: Alway M112

Week 7: 11/6: Alway M114

Week 8: 11/13: Alway M112

Week 9: 11/20: Alway M112

Week 10: No Class - Thanksgiving Break

Week 11: 12/4: LK 308

Week 1: LK 308 / Introduction - Diagnosis and Screening

- Moderators: [Paul Ford](#) & [Natalie Lui](#)
- **Description:** Introduction to the course structure and objectives. Dr. Lin will share his personal journey of receiving a lung cancer diagnosis and the initial emotional, physical, and professional impact. A discussion will also follow on the efficacy, accessibility, and limitations of various screening tools for lung cancer, and how to talk to patients about screening. Insights into how early detection can impact prognosis and treatment options.

Week 2: Alway M112 / Being Mortal: Having Difficult Conversations

- Moderator: [Peter Pompei](#)
- **Description:** A hands-on session focusing on how to handle difficult conversations about prognosis, end-of-life care, and patient wishes. Students will actively participate in role-playing exercises to practice these challenging conversations.

Week 3: LK 308 / Access, Affordability, and Patient-Centered Values of Cancer Care

- Moderators: [Niraj Sehgal](#)
- **Description:** Overview of healthcare's impact on cancer treatment access and affordability. We will discuss insurance coverage, financial toxicity, disparities in care, and the resources available to patients. The emphasis will be on the importance of centering a patient's values in their treatment plan. Discussions will explore how personal values influence treatment decisions and life choices, balancing professional and personal aspirations.

Week 4: LK 308 / Caregiving and Ethics

- Moderator: [Ranak Trivedi](#) and Christina Chan

- **Description:** Examination of the caregiving role in cancer treatment and recovery. Discussion on the ethical challenges faced by caregivers, strategies for providing effective support, and the importance of caregiver well-being. Personal experiences from Dr. Lin's support network will be shared to highlight real-life caregiving dynamics.

Week 5: Alway M112 / Spirituality and Cancer - Goals of Care

- Panel: [Rev. Miyaji](#) (Buddhism), [Taqwa Surapati](#) (Islam), and Paramesh Gopi (Hinduism)
- **Description:** Discussion on the role of spirituality and religion in coping with a cancer diagnosis. Exploration of spiritual care services, chaplaincy, and the integration of spiritual practices in medical care. Setting and discussing goals of care with patients and their families, with personal reflections from Dr. Lin on finding meaning and support through faith.

Week 6: Alway M112 / Epidemiology and Cultural Considerations

- Moderator: [Jeffrey Velotta](#)
- **Description:** Exploration of the connection between lung cancer screening & epidemiology, focusing on non-smoker cases. Analysis of risk factors, genetic predispositions, and environmental influences. Discussion on cultural considerations in cancer care, including how cultural beliefs and practices influence patient experiences and treatment outcomes.

Week 7: Alway M114 / Nutrition and Cancer

- **Moderator:** [Katherine Donelan](#)
- **Description:** Insights into the role of nutrition in cancer prevention and treatment. Discussion on dietary recommendations for cancer patients, managing side effects of treatment through diet, and the impact of nutrition on overall well-being and recovery.

Week 8: Alway M112 / Cancer Stories and Mental Health

- Moderator: [Cynthia Nguyen](#), [Anne Harper Charity Hudley](#), & [Davies Wong](#)
- **Description:** This session will focus on the psychological impact of cancer on patients and their families, particularly addressing the unique challenges faced by different cultural groups. Discussion will emphasize practical strategies for encouraging patients to utilize these services. Personal stories will illustrate the mental health challenges and coping mechanisms, providing insights into effective communication techniques and culturally sensitive approaches to support mental well-being in cancer care.

Week 9: Alway M112 / Cancer Treatment

- **Moderator:** [Heather Wakelee](#)

- **Description:** Overview of the latest treatment modalities for advanced lung cancer, including surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy. The session will also touch on ongoing promising cancer care initiatives and clinical trials.

Week 10: [Thanksgiving Break]

Week 11: LK 308 / The Future of Cancer Care

- **Moderator:** [Joel Neal](#) & [Sumit Shah](#)
- **Description:** This session will explore cutting-edge advancements in cancer treatment, including CAR-T therapy, antibody-drug conjugates, and next-generation drug inhibitors. We will discuss where hope lies in these new technologies and how they are shaping the future of cancer care.