



# New Survey Finds Majority of Women with Breast Cancer Who Work Want to Do So Even While Undergoing Treatment

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Three out of four women surveyed feel working aids in their recovery, and healthcare professionals agree Greater support and communication from employers and healthcare professionals can help women with breast cancer thrive in the workplace

A new survey reveals that 77 percent of working women with breast cancer, including those with metastatic disease, feel that working aids in their recovery – a view shared almost unanimously by healthcare professionals, who were also surveyed (92%). The Supporting Workplace Conversations survey is the first to comprehensively examine the perspectives of working women with breast cancer, healthcare professionals and employers on the topic of breast cancer and the workplace.

The survey was commissioned by Pfizer Inc. and Cancer and Careers, an organization that empowers and educates people with cancer to thrive in their workplace, and conducted online by Harris Poll with 1,002 female breast cancer patients and survivors who have worked or looked for work since their diagnosis, as well as 102 employers and 200 healthcare professionals who treat breast cancer patients.

The findings of the survey, part of the Breast Cancer: A Story Half Told initiative, are striking, revealing:

Women with breast cancer – including those with metastatic disease, the most advanced stage of breast cancer – want to work for both financial and emotional reasons: Fifty-six percent of women surveyed prefer to work given their current health situation. When asked to select up to three out of nine reasons why, respondents chose the need for

income (59%) followed closely by psychosocial reasons such as wanting to feel productive (41%), for personal fulfillment (38%) and a desire to feel normal (29%). Notably, women with metastatic breast cancer were nearly twice as likely (48% versus 25%) to report the desire to feel normal as a reason for wanting to work, compared to respondents with earlier-stage breast cancer. Despite their desire to work, women with breast cancer feel their disease negatively impacts their work life: Nearly half of women surveyed (48%) feel that the disease and its treatments (especially treatment side effects, 36%) have negatively impacted their work life, leading them to take extra days off, work a reduced schedule, take a paid or unpaid leave of absence, or resign from a job. There is a disparity between the supportive measures and benefits employers report they provide and what women with breast cancer report are available; this difference in perspective may be due to a lack of communication: Most employers surveyed (91%) believe their organization is supportive of employees who have serious health conditions such as breast cancer. However, the majority of women surveyed had not talked to someone at work about job modifications (51%), legal rights (72%) or programs to help people cope (73%). Further, 73 percent of employers surveyed report specific job modifications are available for all employees, while only 22 percent of women reported being aware that job modifications are/were available at their current or most recent job. Opportunities exist for healthcare professionals to increase support for women who are working during breast cancer treatment: While women surveyed feel that healthcare professionals are generally helpful in discussing work life and cancer, nearly half said their work life was not taken into account when treatment decisions were made. Separately, 87 percent of oncologists and 92 percent of nurses/nurse navigators/medical social workers agree that they need more tools to help women with breast cancer navigate their work environment.

“Breast cancer is a diagnosis that can come with complicated treatment decisions as well as life decisions, including whether to work while undergoing treatment,” said Dr. Julia Perkins Smith, Senior Medical Director, U.S. Breast Cancer Lead, Pfizer Oncology. “As this survey shows, working can provide not only financial but emotional value to women with breast cancer, including those with metastatic disease, who are always in treatment and may have a desire to maintain a feeling of normalcy even in the face of a challenging condition.”

“These findings suggest a need for improved alignment between patient needs and support from employers and healthcare professionals, who play a central role in helping women with breast cancer thrive in the workplace,” said Rebecca Nellis, Chief Mission Officer, Cancer and Careers. “The intentions of both healthcare professionals and

employers are positive; however, the conversations do not seem to be taking place at the level of detail that may be most productive to women with breast cancer.”

Breast cancer is the most common invasive cancer in women, with an estimated 1.7 million new cases diagnosed each year worldwide.<sup>1</sup> In the U.S. today, there are an estimated 150,000 to 250,000 people living with metastatic breast cancer<sup>2</sup>, the most advanced stage of breast cancer, many of whom are active in their careers.<sup>3</sup>

#### About the Supporting Workplace Conversations Survey

Online surveys were conducted from June 9-23, 2014, to holistically evaluate the state of breast cancer and especially metastatic disease in the workplace by examining the perspectives of women with breast cancer, healthcare professionals and employers. Study sample: 1,002 female breast cancer patients and survivors 18+ who have worked or looked for work since diagnosis (189 of whom were metastatic breast cancer patients); separately, 102 employers (Human Resources or Employee Benefits managers, or executives with those responsibilities) in companies with 5+ employees in the U.S.; 100 oncologists who treat women with breast cancer; 100 oncology nurses/NPs, nurse navigators and medical social workers who see breast cancer patients.

The healthcare professionals and HR managers who were surveyed were not directly related to the patient respondents. The samples of patients, oncologists and HR managers are weighted to help ensure they are representative of their respective populations.

#### About the Breast Cancer: A Story Half Told – Supporting Workplace Conversations Steering Committee

The steering committee members, who were responsible for the development and contextualization of the survey, include:

Rebecca Nellis, M.P.P., Chief Mission Officer, Cancer and Careers Kate Sweeney, Executive Director, Cancer and Careers Jenna Glazer, Senior Director of Development, Young Survival Coalition Marc Hurlbert, Ph.D., Executive Director, Avon Foundation Breast Cancer Crusade Joanna Morales, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, Triage Cancer Lillie Shockney R.N., Administrative Director, Johns Hopkins Breast Center Rochelle Shoretz, Esq., Founder and Executive Director, Sharsheret Brian Tomlinson, M.P.A., B.S.W., Chief Program and Communications Officer, CancerCare Lynn Zonakis, R.N., Managing Director of Health Strategy and Resources, Delta Air Lines, Inc.

A summary of the survey results and other information about Breast Cancer: A Story Half Told is available at [www.pfizer.com](http://www.pfizer.com).

## About Breast Cancer: A Story Half Told

Breast Cancer: A Story Half Told aims to expand the breast cancer conversation on multiple fronts. Earlier this year, Pfizer unveiled the results of two complementary studies that uncovered gaps in the breast cancer conversation within society at large and between patients and physicians in the doctor's office, and along with leaders in the breast cancer community issued a public call-to-action to expand the breast cancer dialogue to include metastatic disease. Breast Cancer: A Story Half Told - Supporting Workplace Conversations aims to identify gaps in the current conversation about breast cancer and the workplace, and encourage healthcare professionals and employers to join together with women with breast cancer to better address their unique workplace needs.

## Cancer and Careers

Cancer and Careers, founded in 2001, is a national nonprofit organization that empowers and educates people with cancer to thrive in their workplace by providing expert advice, interactive tools and educational events. Cancer and Careers reaches nearly 300,000 people per year online, in print and in person with services that include a comprehensive website, free publications in English and Spanish, legal and insurance information, career coaching, resume review, and national events and speaking engagements for employees with cancer and their healthcare providers and coworkers.

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1 International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and World Health Organization (WHO). GLOBOCAN 2012: Estimated cancer incidence, mortality and prevalence worldwide in 2012. Available at: [http://globocan.iarc.fr/Pages/fact\\_sheets\\_cancer.aspx](http://globocan.iarc.fr/Pages/fact_sheets_cancer.aspx). Accessed October 14, 2014. 2 AdvancedBC.org. Silent voices: women with advanced (metastatic) breast cancer share their needs and preferences for information, support and practical service. Available at: <http://www.advancedbc.org/node/26>. Accessed on October 14, 2014. 3 KantarHealth, <http://cancerimpact.khapps.com>. Last updated December 2013.

This press release has an accompanying Smart Marketing Page providing further details about the organization, products and services introduced below. You can access the Smart Marketing Page via the following link:

<http://smp.newshq.businesswire.com/pages/cancer-and-careers>

Cancer and Careers Sarah Goodell, 646-929-8023 or Pfizer Sally Beatty, 347-330-7867