



Episode Show Notes

Episode Title:

Side Effects & Lung Cancer: What Patients Wish Doctors Knew

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Episode Description

Side effects are one of the most challenging and under-discussed aspects of living with lung cancer. In this episode, host Annabelle Gurwitch and advocate Colette Smith share powerful stories about navigating treatment side effects, doctor-patient communication breakdowns, and the invisible challenges that persist long after treatment ends.

Colette, diagnosed with Stage 1A lung cancer 10 years ago, continues to face chronic breathing difficulties and pain from surgery. Annabelle, living with stage IV EGFR+ lung cancer, discusses severe TKI side effects that her doctor initially dismissed, and how she discovered dosage flexibility that changed her quality of life.

Learn practical strategies to report side effects effectively, advocate for dosage adjustments, and access support resources that can transform your care experience.

Guests

Annabelle Gurwitch – Host, Author, and Patient Advocate

New York Times bestselling author and LCFA Speakers Bureau member living with stage IV EGFR+ lung cancer. Annabelle brings compassion, wit, and unflinching honesty to conversations about the real challenges of living with lung cancer.

Connect: <https://www.annabellegurwitch.com/> | @annabellegurwitch



Colette Smith – Lung Cancer Survivor, Advocate, and Community Leader

Diagnosed with stage 1A lung cancer 10 years ago, Colette serves on Mount Sinai's Community Advisory Board and challenges assumptions about early-stage diagnosis. She speaks openly about surgical recovery complications and ongoing side effects that persist years after treatment.

Key Topics

- Side effects of lung cancer surgery and long-term complications
 - TKI (targeted therapy) toxicities and under-reporting
 - Doctor-patient communication and dismissive responses
 - Dosage adjustments and treatment flexibility
 - When to change doctors and get second opinions
 - Scanxiety, mental health, and existential anxiety
 - Complementary therapies and out-of-pocket costs
 - Community support and finding joy while living with side effects
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Key Takeaways

- **Report All Side Effects** – Under-reporting prevents dosage adjustments that could help
 - **Advocate for Yourself** – You have the right to seek second opinions or change providers
 - **Early-Stage Doesn't Mean Easy** – Surgery has long-term side effects that deserve support
 - **Dosage Flexibility Exists** – TKI dosages can often be lowered while maintaining effectiveness
 - **Community Is Essential** – Connect with other patients for validation and practical tips
 - **Mental Health Matters** – Anxiety and scanxiety are normal; seek support
 - **Find Joy and Purpose** – Acts of service and allowing yourself pleasures are powerful coping strategies
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Powerful Quotes

"When you're stage one, everyone thinks you're okay. But I'm not okay. I can't breathe the way I used to breathe." – Colette Smith



"We under-report our side effects because we're afraid they're going to take us off our medication. But then we're suffering in silence." — Colette Smith

"If your doctor makes you feel stigmatized or uncomfortable, you have every right to get a second opinion or change doctors." — Annabelle Gurwitch

"The anxiety doesn't match your stage. You can be stable and still be terrified." — Colette Smith

"Life has an expiration date. Acknowledging that is actually empowering—it makes you want to live more fully." — Annabelle Gurwitch

"Eat the bread. Have the cheesecake. Find your joy." — Colette Smith

Resources Mentioned

LCFA Resources

- **LCFA Website:** <https://lcfamerica.org>
- **Living With Lung Cancer AMA Podcast:**
<https://lcfamerica.org/living-with-lung-cancer/ask-me-anything/>
- **LCFA Speakers Bureau:** <https://lcfamerica.org/speakers-bureau/>

Advocacy & Information

- **Patient-Centered Dosing Initiative (The Right Dose):** <https://www.therightdose.org/>
- **EGFR Resisters Facebook Group:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EGFRResisters/>
- **Annabelle Gurwitch:** <https://www.annabellegurwitch.com/>

Additional Support

- Hospital chaplaincy services (often free)
- Cancer-specific therapists and psycho-oncologists
- Online patient communities and support groups
- Complementary therapies: massage, acupuncture, physical therapy

Action Steps



For Patients & Caregivers:

- Report ALL side effects to your oncologist, even uncomfortable ones
- Ask about dosage adjustments if side effects are severe
- Keep a side effect journal with dates and severity
- Seek second opinions when concerns are dismissed
- Join online patient communities for support
- Explore complementary therapies with your care team
- Allow yourself pleasures and find joy

For Healthcare Professionals:

- Create safe space for patients to report all side effects
 - Proactively discuss dosage flexibility
 - Connect patients with mental health resources early
 - Validate that early-stage patients face real challenges
 - Recognize anxiety and scanxiety as normal parts of survivorship
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About the Podcast

Living With Lung Cancer: Ask Me Anything is LCFA's podcast empowering lung cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers with information, resources, and inspiration. Hosted by Annabelle Gurwitch with rotating survivor co-hosts, each episode features candid conversations about navigating healthcare and advocating for yourself. No topic is off-limits.

About LCFA

Lung Cancer Foundation of America improves lung cancer survivorship through funding transformative science, raising public awareness, and providing access to information, hope, and contemporary treatment options. Since 2007, LCFA has invested \$4.4 million in lung cancer research, generating \$43 million in follow-on funding.

Learn more: <https://lcfamerica.org> | **Donate:** <https://lcfamerica.org/donate>



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Topics: *Side Effects, Lung Cancer, TKI Toxicity, Surgery Recovery, Patient Advocacy, Doctor-Patient Communication, Mental Health, Scanxiety*

SEO Focus: *Side Effects of Lung Cancer Treatment, TKI Side Effects, Surgery Recovery, Patient Advocacy*

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