



# Episode Show Notes

**Episode Title:** Shared Decision-Making in Lung Cancer: A Patient's Guide to Doctor Communication

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## Episode Description

Effective communication with your oncologist can transform your lung cancer care—but knowing what to say and ask isn't always intuitive. In this episode, host Annabelle Gurwitch reunites with Dr. Alice Shaw, Director of the Center for Thoracic Cancers at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, for a candid conversation about mastering the art of shared decision-making.

Dr. Shaw explains how oncologists approach first meetings with patients, why stating your treatment goals clearly matters, and how to communicate about side effects in ways that lead to real solutions. She reveals that dose reductions are often possible—something many patients don't realize—and encourages seeking second opinions as standard good medicine, not a betrayal of your care team.

Learn practical strategies for becoming a more empowered patient, discover the value of lung cancer patient communities for peer support, and understand why today's complex treatment landscape makes doctor-patient communication more important than ever. Whether you're newly diagnosed, years into treatment, or supporting a loved one, this conversation offers actionable guidance for getting the most out of every appointment.

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## Guests

**Annabelle Gurwitch** – Host, Author, and Patient Advocate

New York Times bestselling author and LCFA Speakers Bureau member living with stage 4 EGFR+ lung cancer. Annabelle brings compassion, wit, and unflinching honesty to conversations about the real challenges of living with lung cancer. Diagnosed five years ago, she uses her platform to advocate for patients and raise awareness about treatment advances.



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

LCFA Profile: <https://lcfamerica.org/speaker-profile/annabelle-gurwitch/>

**Dr. Alice Shaw** – Director, Center for Thoracic Cancers, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute  
Dr. Alice Shaw is an internationally recognized expert in targeted therapies for lung cancer, particularly for patients with ALK and ROS1 rearrangements. As Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, her groundbreaking research has been instrumental in developing and testing next-generation targeted therapies that have transformed outcomes for patients with rare oncogene-driven lung cancers. Dr. Shaw's work focuses on precision medicine approaches, including developing drugs that penetrate the blood-brain barrier to treat and prevent brain metastases.

Connect: <https://www.dana-farber.org/thoracic-oncology/>

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## Key Topics

- How oncologists approach first meetings and get to know patients beyond their diagnosis
  - The evolution of lung cancer treatment over the past 20 years
  - Understanding biomarkers and why they matter for treatment selection
  - How to clearly communicate your treatment goals to your oncologist
  - The power of stating: "This is what my goal is. How close can you get me to achieving that?"
  - Why being specific about side effects leads to better solutions
  - Dose reduction: what patients need to know and when to ask
  - The value of lung cancer patient communities for peer support and practical advice
  - When and how to seek a second opinion
  - Why specialized care matters in today's complex treatment landscape
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## Key Takeaways

**State Your Goals Clearly** – Tell your oncologist: "This is what my goal is. How close can you get me to achieving that?" This simple statement ensures your treatment plan aligns with what matters most to you.

**Be Specific About Side Effects** – Don't just say you're "kind of tired." Quantify your experience: "If I was at 100% before treatment, I'm now at 60%." Specificity helps your doctor understand the true impact and find solutions.



**Ask About Dose Reduction** – Many patients don't realize that dose adjustments are often possible, especially with targeted therapies. If side effects are impacting your quality of life, ask if reducing your dose is an option.

**Connect With Patient Communities** – Groups like EGFR Resisters, ALK Positives, and ROS1ders offer invaluable peer support and practical advice from others living with the same diagnosis and side effects.

**Seek Second Opinions Without Guilt** – It's not a betrayal of your doctor—it's good medicine. Today's treatment landscape is so complex that even experienced oncologists welcome additional expert perspectives.

**Understand Your Biomarkers** – Knowing what's driving your cancer helps you understand your treatment options and participate more meaningfully in decisions about your care.

**Your Oncologist Wants to Know You** – The best care happens when your doctor understands your life, values, and goals beyond your diagnosis. Share what matters to you.

**Today's Patients Are More Informed** – Oncologists are seeing patients who want more information and want to participate in treatment decisions. You're not being difficult by asking questions—you're being a good patient.

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## Powerful Quotes

"Part of the reason I take a long time in my first meeting is because I want to get to know patients outside of their cancer. What were they like before this whole diagnosis happened? Because that really helps you understand where they're coming from." – Dr. Alice Shaw

"This is what my goal is. How close can you get me to achieving that?" – Communication framework shared by Annabelle Gurwitch

"If a patient sees their physician and they say, 'I'm kind of tired,' if that is where it ends... you might very well just say, just keep going with your drug. But if you say, 'If you were at a hundred percent before we started this drug, where do you think you are now?'—that changes the conversation." – Dr. Alice Shaw

"I've been so impressed that patients get great advice from other patients and sometimes maybe even better advice than from their own providers because they're talking to patients who are living with the same side effects." – Dr. Alice Shaw



"This therapeutic landscape of lung cancer is so complicated now. There are so many new developments. There are so many clinical trials. I would hope most oncologists would feel like it's absolutely reasonable to get a second opinion." – Dr. Alice Shaw

"These alterations that can occur in key genes now are putting the gas down, putting your foot on the gas pedal, and there's no brakes around... you're just go, go, go." – Dr. Alice Shaw on oncogenic drivers

"I suffered through side effects because I didn't know dose reduction was an option." – Annabelle Gurwitch

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## 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/>
- LCFA Second Opinion Resources: <https://lcfamerica.org/resources/second-opinion/>
- Biomarker Testing Information: <https://lcfamerica.org/lung-cancer-info/diagnosing-lung-cancer/biomarker-testing/>
- Treatment Options Overview: <https://lcfamerica.org/lung-cancer-info/treatment/>

### Patient Advocacy & Support Communities

- EGFR Resisters – Patient community for EGFR+ lung cancer: <https://www.egfrresistors.org/>
- ALK Positives – Patient community for ALK+ lung cancer: <https://www.alkpositive.org/>
- ROS1ders – Patient community for ROS1+ lung cancer: <https://www.theros1ders.org/>

### Find Specialized Care

- Elevate Lung Cancer Care: <https://elevatelungcancercare.com/>
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## Action Steps



## For Patients & Caregivers:

- **Before your next appointment:** Reflect on your treatment goals and what matters most to you
- **Practice stating your goals:** "This is what my goal is. How close can you get me to achieving that?"
- **Track your side effects:** Note how they impact your daily life on a scale of 1-100%
- **Ask about dose reduction:** If side effects are affecting your quality of life, ask if adjustments are possible
- **Join a patient community:** Connect with EGFR Resisters, ALK Positives, ROS1ders, or other groups based on your diagnosis
- **Consider a second opinion:** Especially if treatment decisions are unclear or you want additional perspectives
- **Keep copies of all test results:** Including biomarker testing and pathology reports
- **Bring a list of questions:** Write them down before appointments so you don't forget
- **Bring a support person:** They can take notes and help you remember what was discussed

## For Healthcare Professionals:

- Take time in first meetings to understand patients beyond their diagnosis
- Ask patients about their treatment goals and priorities
- Proactively discuss dose reduction options when prescribing targeted therapies
- Encourage patients to quantify side effect impact on daily life
- Connect patients with oncogene-specific patient communities
- Welcome and facilitate second opinions
- Recognize that today's patients often want more information and shared decision-making
- Provide resources for peer support alongside clinical care

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## About the Podcast

Living With Lung Cancer: Ask Me Anything is LCFA's survivor-led podcast that strips away clinical jargon to reveal what living with lung cancer really looks like. Hosted by New York Times bestselling author Annabelle Gurwitch and endurance runner James Hiter, this podcast hands the microphone to those who know this disease best—lung cancer survivors and the experts who treat them.



No topic is off-limits. No question is too uncomfortable. No experience is too raw to share. Each episode features candid conversations about navigating healthcare, advocating for yourself, and finding hope through scientific advancement.

**Raw conversations. Real survivors. No filters.**

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## 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.

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

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