

## UNDERSTANDING PRECISION MEDICINE

### **Cancer patients have more treatment options than ever.**

Knowing which treatment provides the best chance at overcoming their disease or minimizing symptoms and side effects during treatment, however, can be a challenge. Precision medicine allows patients and providers to identify more targeted, effective treatments.

#### *Q: What is precision medicine?*

Precision medicine is an approach to care that entails a treatment that is based on the specific genes, proteins or other compounds causing a patient's condition. Providers take knowledge of a patient's underlying pathology to target the condition's exact cause and develop a treatment path based on that information. Treatments can be more precise and, in many cases, more effective.

Precision medicine has the potential to transform cancer care into a more targeted, personalized health care specialty. Innovative tests, such as biomarker tests, can identify specific genes, proteins or markers in a patient's cancer cells. Clinicians can then personalize targeted treatment plans for the patient's specific mutation. As more biomarkers are identified, clinicians can implement precision medicine in many fields of medicine to devise the right treatment plan for each patient.



## Q: What are the benefits of precision medicine for **patients**?

Precision medicine can have a positive impact on patients, families and providers.

- **Determine the best treatment options**
- **Fine-tune treatments to patients' precise needs**
- **Inform patients about conditions & risk factors**

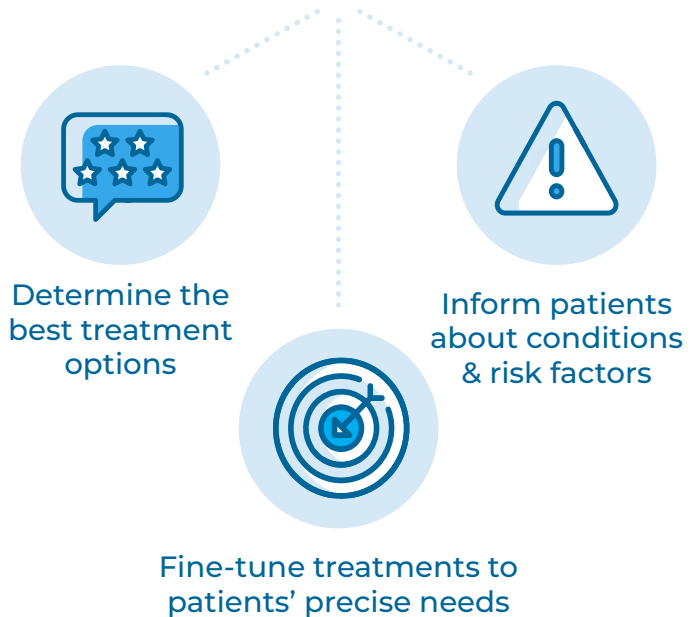
Patients may be able to rely on less invasive treatments with fewer side effects to manage their cancer. Some treatments can have severe side effects, and there isn't a guarantee they will be effective. But with treatment plans derived from precision medicine, providers can target the exact genes or cells responsible for the cancer.

One of the greatest benefits of precision medicine is the ability to fine-tune treatments. When providers understand what causes a health condition, they can target it through innovative treatment options.

And precision medicine can also serve as an alert system. Testing can help uncover other potential conditions or risks, giving patients the opportunity to treat these conditions or adjust their lifestyle to minimize risk factors. When risks are identified earlier, patients and providers can chart a path forward that serves their health. Precision medicine can also alert family members to a potential hereditary condition.

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## BENEFITS OF PRECISION MEDICINE FOR PATIENTS



## Q: What are the benefits of precision medicine for **providers**?

Clinicians also benefit from precision medicine. Testing gives clinicians more information to work with, ultimately leading to additional options. It can increase their likelihood of successful treatment.

Additional information also helps providers quickly identify an optimal treatment plan. Clinicians can swiftly diagnose a patient's condition with an added layer of specificity, ultimately leading to better health outcomes.

Caring for patients with cancer can also be an emotional challenge. But precision medicine can give providers some peace of mind that the treatment they're using is effective and what their patient needs.

## Q: What prevents patients and providers from utilizing precision medicine?

Some barriers may prevent patients from accessing testing and innovative, life-saving treatments.



### Coverage Challenges

Health care coverage can pose a serious issue for patients. Some health plans don't cover biomarker or genetic testing. Accessing the results and identifying the exact cause of a patient's cancer is simply out of reach when patients and providers can't utilize these tests. And in instances where policies do cover genetic testing, they may not cover the genetic counseling or innovative treatment options that will best treat cancer.



### Accessing a Genetic Counselor

Genetic counselors help identify specific genes at play. These providers help patients understand their disease, test results and treatment options. A shortage of these providers can complicate a patient's precision medicine experience.



### Utilization Management

Utilization management tactics are another roadblock. Prior authorization and step therapy may delay access to both diagnostic testing and targeted treatment. These lengthy processes can delay treatment, allowing the patient's disease to progress.

## Q: What policies can increase access to precision medicine?

Policies that put patients first can improve access to precision medicine.

Much of precision medicine relies upon biomarker testing. At the state level, policies should ensure and protect patients' access to these tests, as well as the optimal follow-on treatments.

Policymakers can also protect patients by implementing policies that rein in utilization management. Requiring prompt authorization request responses, improving the appeals process, and ensuring providers and patients know why decisions are made can protect patients from lengthy delays. Good policies could also protect patients from repeating failed medications during step therapy.

As innovative options become available, patients need swift access to these life-changing treatments.





## CONCLUSION

Precision medicine has the potential to open doors for many patients. By identifying the unique physiological changes that have caused a certain condition, providers can develop treatment plans that target a patient's condition down to the cell.

As patients, families and providers fight cancer, precision medicine will ensure that patients get the personalized care they need.

## RESOURCES

**"Benefits of Precision Oncology." Cancer Treatment Options & Management Inc.**  
<https://www.ctoam.com/precision-oncology/benefits/>

**"Precision medicine for breast cancer." Mayo Clinic.**  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/precision-medicine-breast-cancer/about/pac-20522213>.

**"Precision or Personalized Medicine: Precision Medicine for Cancer." American Cancer Society, 15 June 2023,**  
[www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/precision-medicine.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/precision-medicine.html).

**"What Is Precision Cancer Medicine?" American Association for Cancer Research, 27 Dec. 2019,**  
[www.aacr.org/patients-caregivers/progress-against-cancer/what-is-precision-cancer-medicine/](http://www.aacr.org/patients-caregivers/progress-against-cancer/what-is-precision-cancer-medicine/).



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