What is PAT?

PAT stands for Psychosocial Assessment Tool. It is a screening tool in the form of a brief questionnaire first developed in 2001 by a team at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia to screen and classify pediatric cancer families into high, moderate, or low psychosocial risk based on their total PAT score. The results can be relayed to the family’s healthcare team for appropriate follow-ups and access to helpful resources.

The PAT is predictive of later psychosocial difficulties and allows for identification of a family's areas of risk and resiliency across multiple domains (e.g., family structure and resources, family problems, social support, child problems, acute stress, sibling problems). Level of risk has implications for treatment recommendations to support family adaptation and address problems.

Why is PAT important for childhood cancer families?

It is important to screen for and identify early warnings of psychosocial risk and distress, not only in the child with cancer but in the entire family. The PAT enhances psychosocial support to children with cancer and their families by conducting early psychosocial assessment. Studies found that families that completed the PAT received more services than families that did not complete the PAT. In addition, families in the moderate and high risk categories received more intensive services that those in the low risk category.

Equally important is to identify strengths and resilience factors in the child and family to help them maximize their coping with the demands of cancer treatment.

Using the PAT shortly after diagnosis would allow the healthcare team to allocate services and help families mobilize their resources in the family and in the community.
**Where can I find out more about PAT?**

You can read a presentation by Dr. Maru Barrera (Pediatric Health Psychologist, Senior Associate Clinician Scientist, and PAT champion at SickKids Hospital) here: [http://tinyurl.com/z4fvtec](http://tinyurl.com/z4fvtec)

You can also find more information on this website: [http://www.psychosocialassessmenttool.org](http://www.psychosocialassessmenttool.org)

**How can I access PAT?**

The evidence presented in Dr. Barrera's presentation shows that the PAT clearly works. However, for a variety of reasons (outlined in the presentation), it is not yet widely implemented in Canada and families don't currently have access to it unless they are part of a research project.

OPACC supports the wide implementation of the PAT and encourages families to voice their support for introducing it at treatment hospitals as a standard tool for families to complete at diagnosis to inform the team who will be treating the child.

*You can help us do this by expressing your support of the PAT by requesting it from your social worker or healthcare team and stressing the fact that parents are in favour of using this tool as a standard of care to improve psychosocial care.*

It is our hope that by building awareness of this tool with our families, demand will be created for it by parents and it will start to be widely used by the treatment hospitals.

If you have any questions about this, please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@opacc.org](mailto:info@opacc.org)