

Distress Assessment and Response Tool (DART):

Advancing Personalized Cancer Medicine

BACKGROUND:

Research shows that distress in cancer patients is highly prevalent and associated with poor health outcomes, yet remains poorly detected and inadequately managed. Leading cancer organizations internationally, have highlighted the need for consistent, standardized symptom and concern management.

Princess Margaret Cancer Centre (PM) has developed an innovative Distress Assessment and Response Tool program (DART) in response to this need. DART is a personalized cancer medicine tool, as it works to identify the unique needs of each patient, to facilitate timely focused symptom and concern management. Integration of DART into standard clinic processes and care, allows us to truly partner with our patients.

ABOUT DART:

The Distress Assessment and Response Tool (DART) is a *self-assessment* to measure a patient's **physical symptoms, emotional burden and practical concerns** throughout their cancer journey. DART is comprised of the following validated patient reported outcome measures (PROMs):

- Edmonton Symptom Assessment System-revised (ESAS-r) ^{1,2}
- Patient-Reported Functional Status (PRFS)³
- Canadian Problem Checklist (CPC)⁴
- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)⁵
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7)⁵
- Social Difficulties Inventory (SDI-21)⁶

¹ Bultz, B. et al. Implementing screening for distress, the 6th vital sign: a Canadian strategy for changing practice. *Psycho-Oncology* 2011: 20; 463-469.

² Dudgeon, D. et al. Cancer Care Ontario's experience with implementation of routine physical and psychological symptom distress screening. *Psycho-Oncology* 2011.

³ Martin L, Watanabe S, Fainsinger R, Lau F, Ghosh S, Quan H, Atkins M, Fassbender K, Downing GM, Baracos V. Prognostic factors in patients with advanced cancer: use of the patient-generated subjective global assessment in survival prediction. *J Clin Oncol*: 2010 Oct 1;28(28):4376-83.

⁴ http://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/wp-content/uploads/2.4.0.1.4.5-Guide_CJAG.pdf

⁵ Spitzer RL, Kroenke K, Williams JBW. Validation and utility of a self-report version of PRIME-MD: the PHQ primary care study. *JAMA* 1999; 282(18):1737-1744.

⁶ Wright P, Kiely M, Johnston C, et al. Development and Evaluation of an instrument to assess social difficulties in routine oncology practice. *Quality of Life Research* 14:373-386. 2005.

Several cancer sites have additional disease specific PROMs integrated into DART. Personalized reports are created and discussed with the patient/health care team and sent to the patient's electronic medical record in real time.

PROCESS:

Each ambulatory patient is directed to DART iPads for symptom screening upon check in. DART is completed at EVERY visit prior to seeing the nurse and/or doctor. Results are printed in real time and sent to the patient's electronic patient record. Only items of moderate to high distress appear on the DART report. Clinicians then assess the most concerning items for the patient on that day.

INTER-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE CARE PATHWAY:

An inter-professional collaborative care pathway has been developed to ensure the patient is provided the right care, at the right time, by the right individual. Health care professionals have been provided with a robust toolkit to support evidence based symptom management.

LOW DISTRESS

→ patient self-referral to community resources or provision of patient education materials or linkage to PM Classes

MODERATE DISTRESS

→ management in clinics with discussion of the care plan, education on symptom management or validation/normalization

HIGH DISTRESS

→ may necessitate referral to specialty clinics (psychosocial oncology, pain clinic, palliative care, dieticians, medical reimbursement specialist, cancer rehabilitation and survivorship)

This inter-professional collaborative care pathway is based on the evidence based Symptom Management Guides available on the Cancer Care Ontario website;
www.cancercare.on.ca/toolbox/symptools.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

DART External Website: <http://dart.technainstitute.com/>

Cancer Care Ontario: www.cancercare.on.ca/toolbox/symptools