

Cancer Coaching: Transforming the Care Experience for Patients and Practitioners

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What is Cancer Coaching?

Cancer Coaching starts with a change in perspective from “What’s the matter with you?” to “What matters to you?”. It draws on a person’s frame of reference, experiences, definitions of health and wellbeing, values and preferences as the starting point to establish goals that matter most to each person.

Founded in 2011 by Linda Eagen, President and CEO of the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation, Cancer Coaching was developed in collaboration with healthcare professionals with the input of cancer patients, their families and caregivers. Together, they identified the unmet needs cancer patients and their loved ones can have: physical, emotional, spiritual, informational, navigational and financial. They researched best practices and actively surveyed care innovation leaders from jurisdictions across the world.

Cancer Coaching is the synthesis of these best practices. It enables a shift from:

- One-size-fits-all models → Person-centered care
- Clinically led approach → Self-management
- Uncertainty around care transitions → Navigation

International evidence has confirmed that these shifts can improve integration and continuity of care, reduce duplication of care, increase efficiency and result in corresponding cost savings. In short, Cancer Coaching can improve outcomes for both the healthcare system and the patients it serves.

Coaching for activation

Cancer Coaching is effective in helping cancer patients become more active participants in their care. This activation often leads to improved health outcomes and contributes to a more positive healthcare experience. It can also significantly change the way cancer patients utilize healthcare resources, reducing the risk that the rising number of cancer cases will overwhelm our healthcare system.

We measure patient activation with all of our clients, which records a measure of the knowledge, skills and confidence a person has in managing their own health and health care. Clients complete the Patient Activation Measure (PAM) questionnaire before their first appointment with a Cancer Coach to see how they view their health and their role in improving and managing it before the coaching intervention. Clients also complete the questionnaire at regular intervals throughout the coaching intervention to see how their perceived knowledge, skills and confidence evolve over time.

Coaching for Activation pairs PAM scores with condition-specific milestones. This allows us to provide the right level of care at the right time during the client’s experience with cancer.

To date, more than 350 peer-reviewed, published studies worldwide underscore the importance of activation (and the PAM survey’s effectiveness in measuring activation) to predict a broad range of health-related behaviors. Research shows increased health activation correlates to improved self-care behaviors, better health outcomes, and lower utilization of healthcare services.

“Imagine being involved in co-creating a vision for a patient’s health, setting goals and developing action plans and then, by asking meaningful questions, actively listening, observing and providing feedback, helping him/her take some control and move forward to achieve those goals. Those coaching skills build on two key elements of your day-to-day practice: clear communication and respect for the client/patient.”

– Gail Donner (Retired RN, PhD), Mary Wheeler (RN, M.Ed., PCC)
Canadian Nurse – June 1, 2013

How Coaching Improves Your Practice

Coaching can invigorate your clinical practice. Coaching can be a short intervention, integrated into the work you are already doing with your patients, and building on your core skills and values as a healthcare practitioner. Integrating coaching tools into everyday conversations with patients and colleagues helps those conversations move forward into action. Coaching is an invaluable approach to working with patients who don’t like being told what to do, and like many of us, prefer to be guided and remain in control.

Seeing how you can help your patient build on their intrinsic motivation to better manage their own health gives additional meaning to your practice. Self-awareness is indispensable in coaching, allowing you to harness your own competencies for the greatest positive impact on others.

Integrating Cancer Coaching into traditional healthcare models has been shown to:

- Reduce the risk of clinician burnout, a serious and growing issue among health care professionals.
- Improve clinician satisfaction.
- Improve leadership style, increase performance, develop strengths in employees or peers with a positive impact on organizational culture.
- Produce significant savings through increased patient responsibility and motivation to self-care.

PAM® ACTIVATION LEVELS			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
DISENGAGED AND OVERWHELMED <i>"My doctor is in charge of my health."</i> Individuals are passive and lack confidence. Knowledge is low, goal-orientation is weak, and adherence is poor. Healthcare utilization: Very high ED/ER use, very high risk of Ambulatory Care Sensitive (ACS) utilization, very high risk of readmission, very low use of preventive care and screens.	BECOMING AWARE BUT STILL STRUGGLING <i>"I could be doing more for my health."</i> Individuals have some knowledge, but large gaps remain. They believe health is largely out of their control, but can set simple goals. Healthcare utilization: High ED/ER use, high risk of ACS utilization, high risk of readmission, low use of preventive care and screens.	TAKING ACTION AND GAINING CONTROL <i>"I'm part of my health care team."</i> Individuals have the key facts and are building self-management skills. They strive for best practice behaviors, and are goal-oriented. Healthcare utilization: Low ED/ER use, low risk of ACS utilization, low risk of readmission, good use of preventive care and screens.	MAINTAINING BEHAVIORS AND PUSHING FURTHER <i>"I'm my own health advocate."</i> Individuals have adopted new behaviors, but may struggle in times of stress or change. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is a key focus. Healthcare utilization: Very low ED/ER use, very low risk of ACS utilization, very low risk of readmission, very good use of preventive care and screens.

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“What I love about using coaching is that it allows me to help people in an even more powerful way: to help them to recognize their own power, to become change agents for themselves and their communities and reclaim a sense of confidence and control over their lives.”

– Melina Ladouceur, MSW, RSW, Cancer Coach

Higher activated patients are:

9x more likely to feel their treatment plans reflect their values

3.3x more likely to initiate a healthy diet after their diagnosis

4.5x more likely to cope with side effects

How Coaching Helps Your Patients

Cancer Coaching helps people regain a sense of control of their lives while effectively managing the daily challenges of cancer.

Immediate outcomes of coaching include:

- Better knowledge of cancer and where to go for up-to-date information
- Improved motivation and readiness to change health behaviours¹
- Coping skills to deal with a cancer diagnosis and self-manage symptoms¹
- Improved quality of life and reduced level of distress
- Confidence in collaborating with their healthcare team



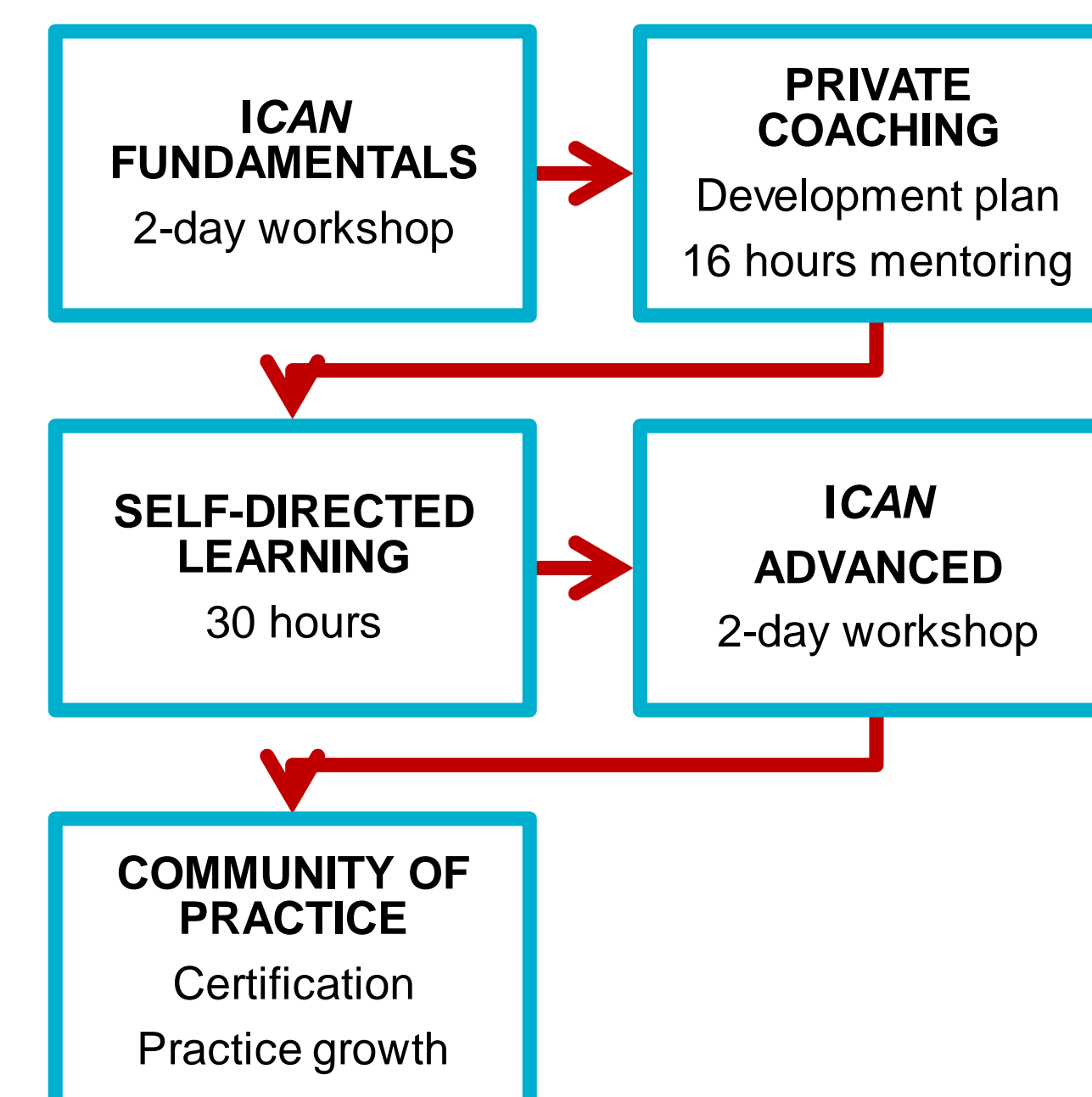
In the long-run, these outcomes allow patients and their families to better reduce their health risks and improve their general health and sense of wellbeing. Health coaching increases overall health outcomes (e.g. medication compliance, physical functioning, self-efficacy and reduced unplanned hospital admissions¹), goal attainment and positivity, and builds on resilience and self-efficacy.² Statistically significant improvements in Wellness for Cancer Survivors have been documented in depression scores, exercise behaviors and quality of life scores.³

ICAN Coach Certification Program

Based on our years of Coaching experience and our research, we are developing an ICAN Coach professional certification program in partnership with the Institut du Savoir Montfort.

The ICAN Coach professional certification program is designed for healthcare professionals to help them apply and adapt health coaching competencies in all healthcare settings. Through the proposed training program, coaches will acquire the following competencies:

- Meeting ethical and professional standards
- Establishing the Coaching Agreement
- Establishing trust and intimacy
- Coaching presence
- Active listening
- Powerful questioning
- Direct communication
- Creating awareness
- Designing actions
- Planning and goal setting
- Managing progress and accountability

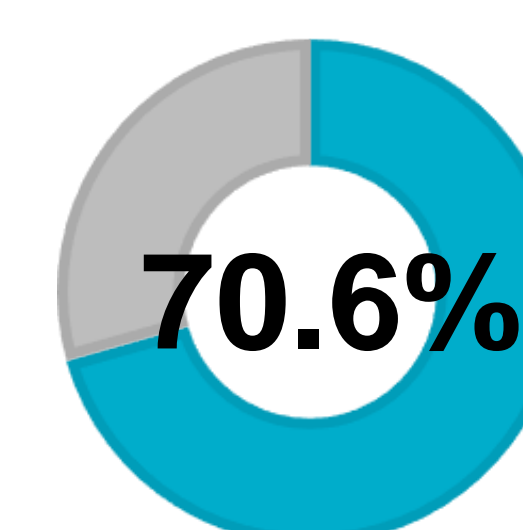


“A fulfilling aspect of my role as a Cancer Coach is coaching other coaches. I love witnessing the profound shift that happens when they realize that coaching is not about being the expert with all the answers. The essence of coaching is empowerment, facilitating people to tap into their core strengths and values to change their lives for the better.”

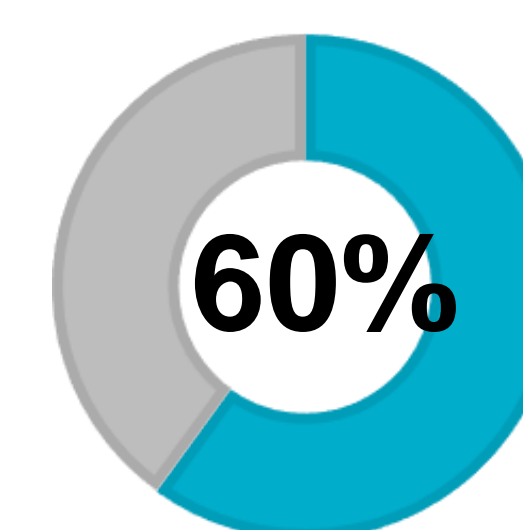
– Bonney Elliott, M.Ed., NP, RP, RYP, Cancer Coach

Results

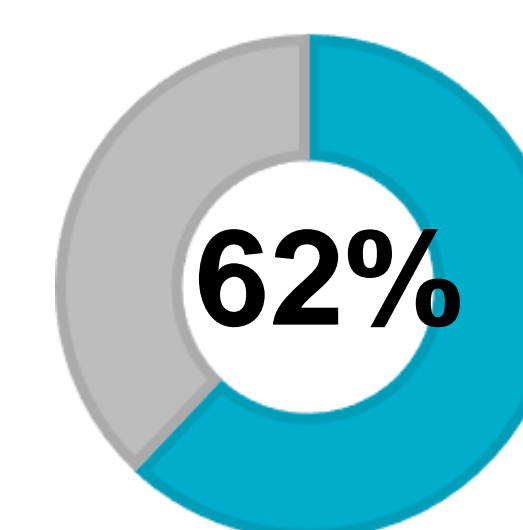
We are seeing significant changes in PAM levels after coaching interventions:



70.6% of clients with initial Level 1 PAM scores had improved scores after coaching.



60% of clients with initial Level 2 PAM scores had improved scores after coaching.



62% of clients with initial Level 3 PAM scores had improved scores after coaching.

Some of our clients have improved their scores enough to move up to a new level on the PAM scale:

- 41% of Level 1 clients have moved to Level 2
- 9% of Level 3 clients have moved to Level 4

Note: A single PAM level increase is associated with an 8.3% reduction in follow-up costs.⁴

References

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4. Lindsay, A., Hibbard, J.H., Boothroyd, D.B. et al. J GEN INTERN MED (2018) 33: 2106. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-018-4657-6>