

Direct pathologist to patient interaction can provide patients and their families reliable information about their diagnosis and highlight the importance of the pathologist in the patient care team. For the pathologist, a direct relationship with patients can be a rewarding experience and a reminder of why you do the hard work that you do.

Here are four steps pathologists can take to start a consultation program.



## 1. Gather Community Support

Successful programs are designed in close collaboration with clinicians, nurses, and administration. Their support is essential to educate patients as well as referring them to their pathologist. Administration may have specific requirements with regard to patient consent, privacy, and documentation of the visit.



## 2. Define Your Patient Approach

Remember that this is not only an informational visit; discussing a cancer diagnosis is an emotional event. Let your empathy and compassion guide you. If questions about treatment arise, you may prefer to defer them to the clinical team.



## 3. Develop A Process

A typical patient consultation lasts about 30 minutes, with about 10 minutes of preparation time. A typical process includes scheduling, check-in procedures, a script for common diagnoses, a way to share diagnostic images, and how you document the visit. This can be achieved as an addendum to the pathology report. Be sure your process keeps the patient's comfort and accessibility in perspective and avoid using medical jargon.



## 4. Follow Up With A Survey

Consider following up with a patient satisfaction survey. The information gathered can facilitate further refinement of the patient-pathology consultation and provide data for discussion with clinical colleagues and administration. In addition, be sure to notify the clinical team that a consultation took place.