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Letter to the editor

Nuance Matters. A response to a Commentary by Dresler et al.

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The commentary by Dresler et al.,¹ conceived as a response to the concerns we expressed in our commentary *Adverse Effects of “Teachable Moment” Interventions in Lung Cancer: Why Prudence Matters*,² calls in turn for a response.

According to Dresler et al.,¹ we claim that a teachable moment approach towards a patient who continues to smoke after a diagnosis of cancer is “not sane”. This is simply not true. What Dresler et al. leave out while quoting, is actually the most important point we made. The complete quote reads: “As with any other interventions with effects and side effects, indications are of utmost importance. **A systematization of teachable moment interventions** is not sane. It is up to the patient to indicate if and when he is motivated to initiate possible modifications of lifestyle to achieve health-protecting behaviors.”² [emphasis added]

We have referred in our commentary to studies showing health benefits of teachable moment interventions and we are convinced that they have psychological benefits too. However, we have raised the issue of the potential psychosocial side effects of these interventions, such as a feeling of failure in cancer patients who do not succeed in changing their lifestyle and health behaviors or the risk of further increasing the burden of the stigma of lung cancer,³ which have to be considered. We firmly believe that medicine is a prudential profession, and a prudential care approach implies a capacity to know patients not merely from a somatic and health perspective as well as an ability to respect nuances. That is why we persist in arguing that action must be preceded by reflection.

References

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