

and reconstructive foot and ankle surgery, foot and ankle fractures

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Q&A

Dr. Jessica Heintz

**VIRGINIA CANCER SPECIALISTS
HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE MEDICINE**

How did you choose your specialty?

I was really drawn to the opportunities to spend more time with patients. Part of what our specialty focuses on is really communication with patients and understanding their individual priorities and preferences about their care and what really matters to them. If I can help them tolerate the treatment, if I can manage their symptoms ... then they can actually have a better outcome, actually live longer.

What have you learned since going into practice? Never judge a book by its cover. Oftentimes, you have preconceived notions about what patients prioritize or what we think they

will want. And that's not always the case. ... So that's why it's so important to sort of create a space and enable patients to be able to amplify their voices and what's important to them.

What's most fulfilling about your work?

Certainly, when I can help someone with a symptom that they have been struggling with for a long time, and they come to me and I'm helping them with pain or shortness of breath, or whatever this symptom is, to feel better, and [when] I see them the next time, they say, "What you recommended worked. And I finally don't feel like I'm suffering anymore."