Medullary thyroid cancer (MTC) is a cancer of the parafollicular cells of the thyroid gland. Although 75% of MTC cases are sporadic and develop without genetic involvement, 25% are genetically inherited. A child born to a parent with familial MTC has a 50% chance of inheriting the germline mutation of the RET proto-oncogene, which, if inherited, has almost a 100% chance of developing into the malignancy. Addressing issues related to genetic testing can enable healthcare providers to assist patients in adjusting to psychosocial stressors.

Cancer Society (2006) estimated that 30,180 people will be diagnosed with thyroid cancer in 2006. Six percent of all women and 1.5% of all men will develop a single palpable thyroid nodule.