

Reasonable Expectations

by James C. Chingos, MD, CPE

Defining quality cancer care can, at best, be complicated and open for discussion. Similarly, defining the issues surrounding access to quality cancer care can be as diverse as our complicated healthcare system. Having given considerable thought to my presidential theme—access to quality cancer care—I realized that beyond the obvious issues related to reimbursement, economics, and the cost of care, one facet of access to quality care relates to the reasonable expectations of our patients and their families.

With this in mind, I would like to focus on one such reasonable expectation: quality nursing care. For patients and families dealing with cancer diagnosis and treatment, quality nursing care is essential and necessary. So why then are many hospitals, freestanding cancer centers, and practices cutting back or cutting out their oncology certified nurses? These highly trained, motivated, and committed nurses are in some cases replaced by less qualified individuals or not replaced at all. This latter option either eliminates the reasonable expectation of high quality cancer nursing or, at the very least, strains the capacity limits of the care setting to provide such care.

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) has for the past 30 years offered educational, programmatic, and networking opportunities for the

oncology specific nurse. Under the skillful and loving guidance of CEO Pearl Moore and others, ONS has held to the fundamental core values that the patients and their families who have been inflicted with cancer deserve nursing care that is:

- Competent
- Compassionate
- Committed to the multidisciplinary approach to overall care
 - Capable of integrating with and working with resources in the community
 - Conscious that the patients' needs should be considered at all times—regardless of their ability to pay.



Recognizing that we live in an environment where difficult manpower decisions are dictated by

economics, I would submit that as patients and families seek out the very best in cancer care, it is reasonable and appropriate for them to expect that their nursing care should meet the same standards expected of the physician and the facility in which their care is delivered.

The role of the oncology certified nurse is invaluable to quality patient care. Whether dealing with symptom management, conducting patient assessment, educating patients and families, providing psycho-social support, or relieving the physician and other providers of tedious paperwork, the role of the oncology certified nurse is necessary and essential to quality cancer care. Anything less is simply that—less. 📄

Coming in Your
2006
Oncology
Issues

- ◆ Tips for Improving Reimbursement of Oncology Nutrition Services
- ◆ Adoption of a Hybrid CT/PET Scanner in a Radiotherapy Department: The University of Wisconsin Experience
- ◆ USP 797 and the NIOSH Alert: An Update for Oncology Pharmacy
- ◆ A Model Drug Replacement Program
- ◆ Professional Caregiving: The Interdependency of the Oncology Team

Plus, a look at how the Patient Advocate Foundation is helping patients with cancer

