

ACCC Cancer Program Guidelines: Pharmacy Services

by Philip E. Johnson, MS, RPh, FASHP

As new cancer treatments and new technologies become more complex and effective, concerns are being raised about cost, safety, and appropriate use. To address these concerns, several organizations, including the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC), have developed guidelines or regulations that apply to the provision of drug therapy to cancer patients.

In addition to USP 797 and the NIOSH *Alert*, which are discussed at length on pages 38–41, other safety guidelines include:

- A series of National Patient Safety Goals, most of which pertain to medication use, developed by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.
- *Best Practices for Health-System Pharmacy*, a publication of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. This publication is considered the national benchmark for institutional and ambulatory pharmacy practice.
- An annual list of *Avoidable Medical Errors* and *Safe Practices* compiled and published by the National Quality Forum. Currently, these lists include 27 avoidable medical errors and 30 safe practices. Of interest: the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is promoting the concept that patients affected by an avoidable medical error should not be reimbursed for the portion of their care affected by the avoidable error.
- Published by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, the *ISMP Safety Alert* compiles medication error data and makes recommendations to industry and regulatory bodies on medication error detection, reporting, and prevention.

When revising its *Cancer Program Guidelines*, ACCC incorporated all of the above national standards, ensuring that ACCC's "Pharmacy Services Guidelines" are in "harmony" with the nation's best practices. These guidelines are available on ACCC's website, www.accc-cancer.org.

Guideline 1. Pharmacy services pertain to those staff responsible for any aspect of drug therapy, from procurement to final disposition and documentation. A pharmacist should be available to the cancer program to train, certify, or advise the staff responsible for Pharmacy Services.

Guideline 2. Pharmacy services will be responsible for procurement, storage, preparation, distribution, and disposal of commercial and investigational cancer chemotherapy and other medications in a safe and accurate manner. The pharmacy service institutes safeguards that will protect patient safety, ensure accuracy and clinical appropriateness, and provide safe handling to

minimize environmental and personnel exposure to cancer medications.

Guideline 3. Clinical Pharmacy services will be established to ensure the appropriateness and safety of therapy. A multidisciplinary approach should be used in assessing the patient, obtaining medication history, and developing a therapy plan based on the patient's current condition, physiological changes, and reaction to previous therapy. Current medication plans will be reconciled with other providers to ensure coordination.

Guideline 4. Appropriate drug related education will be provided to patients and staff. It is important to incorporate new scientific discoveries and practice standards into practice as soon as possible, by educating patients and members of the multidisciplinary team. Training new staff, and retraining established staff on a regular basis is also important. Specific areas of focus include pharmacology, pharmacokinetics, pharmacodynamics, drug compatibility, drug administration, drug therapy interactions with patients taking multiple therapeutic agents, adverse effects of medication, medication outcomes, and taking comprehensive medication histories.

Guideline 5. Pharmacy Services will contribute to the financial and legal requirements associated with the patient's therapy. A complete and accurate patient bill is important to ensure reimbursement. Pharmacy systems should be designed to ensure that required billing information is complete and accurate in the patient record. All required records should be complete and meet legal requirements for required information and confidentiality (HIPAA). Pharmacy Services can also contribute to the development of budgets, influence good cost management, and perform cost/outcome analysis of therapy.

Today's cancer programs must have a multidisciplinary approach to patient care, including 1) multiple safety checks, 2) stakeholder education on the most current standards and evidence-based practices, and 3) current regulatory and business practices. ACCC's revised guidelines, and their specific characteristics, address the key issues and regulations currently in practice. Regardless of the setting, these national guidelines should be adopted to ensure that the delivery of medication is as safe and effective as possible. 📖

Philip E. Johnson, MS, RPh, FASHP, is director of Pharmacy at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Fla.