



Association of Community Cancer Centers

ONCOLOGY ISSUES

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FROM THE EDITOR

ACCC—Your Innovation Station

BY CHRISTIAN DOWNS, JD, MHA



As I've written many times in my column, community oncology faces a number of delivery challenges. Our issues in medical oncology have been well documented,

but we also face obstacles in surgical oncology, radiation oncology, pathology, imaging, diagnostics, and psychosocial support services.

And while reimbursement for services is an important issue for each of these areas—it is not the sole challenge. For example, prior to implementation of the Affordable Care Act, one of the greatest concerns facing the oncology community was the workforce shortage. The reimbursement environment aside, many were asking whether there would be enough providers to meet patient demand.

Another issue sometimes overlooked in favor of more immediate challenges is innovation. Cancer treatment and delivery is one of the fastest innovating (and evolving) areas of healthcare. At the same time, innovation is often expensive—due not only to high costs associated with researching and developing the innovation, but also with delivering that innovation to market or to a specific patient population.

In this edition of *Oncology Issues*, we look at a few “innovative” ways to deliver quality cancer care. Our goal: to support your adaptation of innovation in a manner that is meaningful and appropriate for your practice setting.

In our cover article, Anne Arundel Medical Center, Annapolis, Md., shares the care delivery challenges it faced after the purchase of a private oncology practice. Increased patient volume, introduction of a new EHR and chemotherapy ordering system, and a less than optimal workflow with infusion nurse triage functions in a separate location from the physician practice all combined to have a negative impact on quality care and patient satisfaction. This 2014 ACCC Innovator Award Winner took quick and decisive action, developing and implementing

an evidence-based Symptom Management Clinic that improved patient satisfaction and reduced the number of ED visits and hospital admissions.

Next, *Oncology Issues'* editorial chair, Susan van der Sommen, MHA, CMPE, FACHE, shares how her program took innovation head-on in their effort to obtain Patient-Centered Specialty Practice (PCSP) recognition. Their hard work and effort paid off—practice efficiencies were achieved; cost-savings were realized in terms of reduced ER visits, hospital admissions, and hospital LOS; and new quality improvement (QI) initiatives were identified.

Another 2014 ACCC Innovator Award Winner, the Edward and Marie Matthews Center for Cancer Care, Plainsboro, N.J., took a novel (and cost-effective!) approach to implementing psychosocial distress screening (CoC Standard 3.2). Tasked with using existing resources and with help from another ACCC member program, a work-group developed a home-grown distress screening tool that was easily incorporated into daily routine—across an entire healthcare system.

In our last feature article, we take an even deeper dive into innovation. In his article “Patient-Specific Therapeutic Vaccines for Metastatic Melanoma,” Robert Dillman, MD, discusses cutting-edge treatment options for patients with metastatic melanoma, including clinical trials using vaccines derived from autologous tumor cell lines. His article dovetails nicely with ACCC's newest education initiative, which is scheduled to launch this spring: ACCC's Institute for Clinical Immunoncology (ICLIO). Designed for community-based providers to better understand the innovation that is immuno-oncology and how this new treatment paradigm can be delivered in their practice settings, ICLIO will offer a number of exciting programs and tools, including a clinical scholars engagement program, monthly e-newsletters, a series of educational webinars, and a national education conference. So stay tuned!