

Advanced Non-Melanoma Skin Cancers: Effective Practices in Multidisciplinary Care

LEVERAGING MULTIDISCIPLINARY NETWORKS TO IMPROVE CARE

Collaborative multidisciplinary relationships and bi-directional referrals play an integral role in oncology, but for disease types that are rare or at high risk to develop into more aggressive forms, these networks can make a critical difference in the delivery of expert cancer care and improved patient outcomes. While basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas of the skin represent more than 80 percent of non-melanoma skin cancers, management of patients with high-risk features associated with advanced cutaneous squamous cell and basal cell carcinoma as well as more rare types, such as Merkel cell carcinoma, cutaneous lymphomas, cutaneous adnexal tumors, Kaposi sarcomas, and others, can be complex and often requires collaboration with multiple specialists.

As patients trust the relationships established with their own healthcare providers, often in community-based care settings, transitioning patients with advanced skin cancers to specialty sites or to a multidisciplinary care team of dermatologists, dermatopathologists, cutaneous oncologists, surgeons, and radiation oncologists, can be challenging. Building clear referral pathways and establishing a network of advanced non-melanoma skin cancer specialists can facilitate this process and ensure patients receive timely, comprehensive care.

In 2019, the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC), with advocacy partners Skin Cancer Education and Research Foundation, Cancer Support Community, and CancerCare, and with support from Regeneron and Sanofi, launched a multi-year education program, *Advanced Non-Melanoma Skin Cancers: Effective Practices in Multidisciplinary Care*, to explore the work of multidisciplinary programs treating patients with cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, and Merkel cell lymphoma, and highlight effective practices in multidisciplinary care. This initiative included site visits to three community cancer

centers, Ellis Fischel Cancer Center in Columbia, Mo., The George Washington University Cancer Center in Washington D.C., and The Knight Cancer Institute in Portland, Ore., which formed the foundation for a comprehensive **best practices guide**, as well as a series of peer-to-peer education sessions held around the country.

Building upon this important work, in 2022, ACCC conducted a series of virtual workshops designed to engage members of the multidisciplinary care team as well as non-oncology specialists on effective practices for supporting, treating, and managing patients with advanced cutaneous non-melanoma skin cancers. ACCC shares a look at the culmination of this education program and its suite of resources that multidisciplinary teams can leverage to expand connections with advanced non-melanoma skin cancer experts and improve multidisciplinary care coordination.

Real-Time Lessons Learned: Visiting Experts Program



The goal of ACCC's Advanced Non-Melanoma Skin Cancers Visiting Experts Program was to bring together specialists in the field of non-melanoma skin cancer to support cancer programs in identifying barriers and developing action plans to improve care for this patient population. Through a series of three, virtual platforms, program participants—which included Community MD Anderson Cancer Center in Indianapolis, Ind., Inova Schar Cancer Institute in Fairfax, Va., and the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Neb.—had the opportunity to discuss complex case studies, exchange opinions in real-time, discuss current challenges and barriers to care, and create action plans to address and overcome these

challenges. Participants were also provided with a series of three, 30-minute eLearning videos curated by ACCC prior to the program, to provide a deeper dive into cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, and Merkel cell lymphoma.

Visiting Experts faculty included Sunandana Chandra, MD, MS, associate professor of Hematology and Oncology at Northwestern University; Carlo Contreras, MD, associate professor of Surgical Oncology at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center; Mark Faries, MD, FACS, co-director of Cutaneous Oncology at Cedars-Sinai The Angeles Clinic and Research Institute; and Emily Smith, MD, clinical associate professor of Pathology and Dermatology at the University of Michigan-Michigan Medicine.

Experts shared several best practices cancer programs could immediately implement to improve care for patients and better facilitate bi-directional referrals. These included key recommendations like scheduling concurrent operations between Mohs, reconstruction, and resection; ensuring communications with referring providers include reporting of high-risk features and identification of patients who are immunosuppressed; and leveraging multidisciplinary tumor boards to discuss patients with high-risk features.

Common themes discussed across workshops included:

- Importance of communication; building close relationships across the multidisciplinary team, with dermatopathologists/pathologists to ensure reporting of high-risk features, as well as enhanced patient/provider communication
- Identification of high-risk non-melanoma skin cancer and patients who may be at high-risk for recurrence
- Psychosocial impact of diagnosis of advanced non-melanoma skin cancer; the social, emotional, physical, and financial burden patients can face
- The role of chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation therapy, and adjuvant therapies for advanced non-melanoma skin cancers
- Importance of adjuvant clinical trials and challenges related to enrollment of patients with cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma

- Concurrent operations between Mohs, reconstruction, and resection
- Leveraging multidisciplinary tumor boards to review cases and discuss patients with high-risk features.

Opportunities for improvements and action plans identified across workshops included:

- Standardization of Mohs protocol (i.e., debulking) for referring surgeons to ensure accurate risk stratification of patients
- Creation of a standard checklist for referring providers to guide patient intake (e.g., available debulking specimen, presence of high-risk features, etc.)
- Leveraging tumor boards to review cases with high-risk features
- Agreement on a universal staging system to channel cases automatically to tumor board
- Creation of a list of commonly seen high-risk scenarios to guide referring providers
- Creation of a contact list for general practitioners to facilitate contact with dermatology experts
- Monitoring of the number of high-risk patients seen and length of time (i.e., number of days) between referral and dermatology visit
- Increase patient awareness and access to dermatology for skin checks.

For more about lessons learned and specifics on the action plans developed by each cancer program, visit the [Visiting Experts Program Spotlight series](#).

Tips from the Experts: Webinar on Building Multidisciplinary Capacity to Care for Patients with Advanced Non-Melanoma Skin Cancers



Expanding upon the success of the Visiting Experts Program, ACCC developed a webinar, *Building Multidisciplinary Capacity to Care for Patients with Advanced Non-Melanoma Skin Cancers*, accessible to providers seeking opportunities to expand multidisciplinary care collaboration and coordination to improve care for patients with non-melanoma

skin cancers. The webinar features expert Dr. Faries, along with special guests Jennifer DeSimone, MD, specialty care physician of Dermatology at Inova Schar Cancer Institute and Rachel Saks, MSS, LSW, OSW-C, senior director of Education at Cancer Support Community, who lead a discussion on identifying strategies to cultivate multidisciplinary collaboration, conduct quality improvement initiatives, and resources available to providers to improve quality care for this patient population.

Sharing Insights: CANCER BUZZ Podcast



Through its official podcast channel CANCER BUZZ, ACCC explored current challenges advanced non-melanoma skin cancer care providers face in practice. These include navigating difficult conversations with patients facing advanced-stage cancer, as well as addressing barriers to care, particularly for patients who live in rural areas.

In a podcast with Dr. Chandra and Rachel Saks (**Podcast Episode 98**), ACCC explores how to engage patients in shared decision-making, particularly when it comes to palliative and supportive care, sharing tips and resources that can help guide patient discussions.

Through a conversation with Dr. Smith (**Video Podcast Episode 25**), ACCC shares how to leverage the skills of a multidisciplinary team to better support patients in rural areas and address other social and emotional determinants of health.

Building a Network: 360 Connect



To facilitate multidisciplinary relationships with ease, ACCC has also curated an online tool, **360 Connect**, which enables providers to locate and connect with experts and non-melanoma skin cancer centers of excellence across the United States. The database is searchable by state and includes specialists in surgical oncology, dermatology, radiation oncology, and medical oncology, with a focus on advanced cutaneous malignancies.

Strengthening Partnerships for Improved Patient Care



Leveraging multidisciplinary networks to better manage care of patients with high-risk features associated with advanced non-melanoma skin cancer or other rare types of skin cancer can be a valuable means to ensuring patients gain access to comprehensive specialty care and improved outcomes. As providers continue to seek new ways to improve patient care, establishing these collaborative relationships, defining clear referral pathways, and calibrating internal processes can create a more seamless transition for patients as they move between providers throughout their cancer care journey.



Association of Community Cancer Centers

A publication from the ACCC education program, "Advanced Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer Care." Learn more at acc-cancer.org/advanced-nm-sc.

The Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) is the leading education and advocacy organization for the cancer care community. For more information, visit acc-cancer.org.

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