

# SOURCES OF HELP FOR ONCOLOGISTS

Marilyn M. Mannisto

Marilyn Mannisto is managing editor of *Oncology Issues*.

**T**he continued tightening of reimbursement for new, expensive chemotherapy agents, and the threat of decreased reimbursement by third-party payors for established drugs, has prompted a number of pharmaceutical manufacturers to develop reimbursement assistance programs for their customers. Some pharmaceutical companies provide oncologists and other health professionals with information on regional reimbursement variations; others will work directly with insurers and employers to try to improve reimbursement levels.

Although the majority of services are reimbursement-specific, other available services include clinical literature searches and educational materials on such topics as setting up an office practice and chemotherapy safety procedures.

The services currently offered by some of the major pharmaceutical firms are outlined below. In most cases, potential users need to contact their customer sales representative to either enroll in a program or to obtain further information about a firm's services.

## ADRIA LABORATORIES

Adria Laboratories provides two major educational products to its customers. One product is a four-part monograph series on the use of continuous infusion chemotherapy. The other product is a basic primer on organizing an office practice, entitled "Guidelines For a Successful Oncology Office Practice." This handy reference contains basic information on payment and reimbursement, including identifying costs and establishing charges for an office practice, and determining the correct insurance coding for chemotherapy.

Both products are available to customers of Adria Laboratories through their sales representative.

## BAXTER HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

Medicare Prevailing Rate Information Line

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, CST,  
call toll-free: 800/262-7631

Since early 1987, Baxter has maintained a Medicare reimbursement database for its customers. This service provides prevailing Medicare reimbursement rates, by locality, for office practice codes (CPT codes). The rates are updated annually.

The service is particularly helpful to oncologists who are establishing a private practice, readjusting their fee schedules, or having difficulty in obtaining reimbursement from a Medicare carrier. The database can be used to check on the prevailing reimbursement level for a particular procedure, such as chemotherapy administration.

Other services that Baxter provides for its customers include: chemotherapy waste pick-up and educational services, such as inservice classes for oncology nurses. Also available, upon request, are copies of a safety education packet, which contains OSHA guidelines, reference articles, and an indepth bibliography of pertinent literature on the safe handling of chemotherapeutic products.

## BRISTOL-MYERS COMPANY

Bristol-Myers Company has an indigent patient assistance program. Oncologists, through their sales representative, can petition the firm to donate a needed chemotherapeutic agent free of charge to

an indigent patient. The requesting oncologist must provide appropriate medical and financial information about the patient for review by the firm. Once a request is approved, the anticancer drug is supplied to the petitioning oncologist for treatment of the patient.

A number of other pharmaceutical firms, including Eli Lilly & Company, provide a similar service. Sales representatives can provide additional information.

## BURROUGHS WELLCOME COMPANY

Burroughs Wellcome Company has a drug information line (800/443-6763) available to all customers who have medical or drug information questions. If there is a reimbursement problem for a Burroughs Wellcome product, the company will provide physicians with references that, in the past, have assisted in improving reimbursement by third-party payors. In addition, the services of the Burroughs Wellcome Co. medical department are available to physicians and other medical professionals.

## HOFFMANN-LA ROCHE, INC.

Oncoline

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, EST,  
call toll-free: 800/443-6676

Oncoline is a toll-free hotline that provides three different services to oncologists and their staffs: a reimbursement assistance program; biomedical literature searches; and access to the National Cancer Institute's clinical treatment protocol database.

The reimbursement service provides a

## MEDICAL CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIPS

NeoRx Corporation is co-sponsoring two medical seminars on monoclonal antibodies within the next six months. The seminars will focus on new directions in monoclonal antibody-based imaging and cancer treatment, and will be hosted by the Baylor Medical School in Houston and the University of Miami School of Medicine. Both conferences provide CME credits for participants.

According to Robert Portman, Ph.D., director of corporate communications, the company plans to continue to sponsor such educational programs. And, once it receives FDA approval for its products (which are still in the clinical trials stage), the company will examine the need to provide reimbursement and clinical literature information services.

variety of information and assistance with regard to third-party payment for Roferon-A. The service will review billing criteria for the appropriate insurer, identify the reasons for claim rejections, identify appropriate insurer procedure codes, clarify and explain reimbursement limitations, and interpret policy guidelines for office and in-home treatment. The service will also contact and initiate discussions with claims supervisors and/or contract administrators of third-party payors, assist in the completion of claims forms, and identify coverage guidelines.

Current Biomedical literature search services include access to CANCERLIT (the NCI's online file of meetings, proceedings, government reports, monographs, and journal abstracts) and to MEDLINE (the National Library of Medicine's online file, which includes Index Medicus). Response packets include bibliographic information and available abstracts and, if requested, precise aspects of treatment, such as pathophysiology or combined-modality therapy. Oncoline users also receive a bimonthly newsletter, which contains summaries of current oncology literature selected from the CANCERLIT and MEDLINE databases.

Oncoline provides callers with access to the NCI's database of more than 6,000 protocols for cancer treatment, both domestic and international, including detailed information on protocol objectives, patient entry criteria, participating organizations, and specific treatment regimens.

To enroll in the program, contact a Roche sales representative.

## SCHERING LABORATORIES

### Interferon Reimbursement Information Service (IRIS)

Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm EST, call toll-free: 800/521-7157

In 1987, Schering Laboratories responded to the oncology community's need to deal with reimbursement issues when using interferon. As a result, a national program was instituted to provide the necessary information to physicians to document that the use of interferon conformed with acceptable medical practice and satisfied the insurance carrier's review policy. It also provides information about a particular insurance carrier's reimbursement policies for various treatment indications.

A physician or office manager can call the Interferon Reimbursement Information Service (IRIS) when they are seeking preauthorization approval or when they have experienced reimbursement difficulties. IRIS's services include the collection of information about the patient, including

diagnosis, prior treatment, prognosis, employer information, insurance coverage, etc. IRIS then checks its database for the oncologist to see what the pattern of reimbursement has been for that particular carrier. If a national insurance carrier is involved, regional reimbursement variation comparisons can be made.

At the request of the oncologist, IRIS will call the insurance carrier to request preauthorization and/or to obtain information about its policies, procedures, and information requirements. An information packet is then assembled. The purpose of the packet is to provide information that will assist the physician in presenting patient and treatment information to the carrier in a format that meets the requirements of complex reimbursement policies. For instance, when a physician believes that interferon is the most appropriate medical care for a particular patient, IRIS will provide clinical documentation of the effectiveness of the therapy and suggested letter formats for corresponding with carriers. In the case of contractual arrangements between insurers and employers, IRIS will try to work with the employer

directly, educating them about the appropriate uses for interferon. In the case of self-insured companies, staff will identify contact persons at the company.

### Interferon Communications Network (ICON)

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, EST, call toll-free: 800/4-INTRON

A complementary service that Schering Laboratories provides is a clinical literature search service through its Interferon Communications Network (ICON). ICON consists of a literature database of all published clinical papers and abstracts for all interferon products (alpha, beta, etc.) for use in both oncology and virology. The database facilitates literature searches on such topics as side effects, clinical action, use in pediatric or geriatric patients, combination therapy, etc. The database contains literature dating back to 1984, with selected coverage of literature since 1980. Independent third-parties develop detailed abstracts for all articles. Health care professionals are provided with the ICON abstracts, as well as a list of literature references as part of the service.

## NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors are encouraged to submit a brief outline of proposed articles or to discuss proposed articles with the Managing Editor of *Oncology Issues* prior to submission. Articles are accepted with the understanding that they have not been published, submitted, or accepted for publication elsewhere. Authors submitting an article do so on the understanding that if it is accepted for publication, copyright shall be assigned to the Association.

### Articles

Articles submitted to *Oncology Issues* for consideration for publication should be no longer than 8 to 10 double-spaced manuscript pages in length. Submissions should include the original manuscript and two duplicate copies. Author(s)' identification (title and affiliation) should be included. If there are multiple authors, one author should be designated as correspondent.

### Review and corrections

Articles will be reviewed by two or more members of the editorial review board. Authors will be informed of acceptance, rejection, or need for revision within 6 to 8 weeks, but at times longer delays may be unavoidable. All articles are subject to copyediting. Author corrections and revisions should be kept to a minimum and must be received within seven days of receipt; after this time, no further changes may be made by the author.

Articles should be submitted to: Marilyn M. Mannisto, Managing Editor, *Oncology Issues*, 11600 Nebel St., Suite 201, Rockville, MD 20852, 301/984-9496

### Illustrations and Tables

Authors are encouraged to submit illustrations, tables, figures, sidebars, etc. that help clarify the text. Tables, figures, and sidebars should be typed on separate pages and their position indicated in the text. Photographs should be unmounted, glossy prints. Photographs will not be returned unless the author indicates "Please return" on the back of the prints. Photo captions should be listed on a separate page.

### Footnotes and References

Footnotes should appear at the bottom of the page on which the corresponding text appears and should be cited in the text with an asterisk, dagger, etc. References should be limited in number and submitted on a separate page. The following form should be used:

#### Books:

Last name of author, first initial; title; editor; publisher; city and state; year of publication.

#### Journals and Periodicals:

Last name of author, first initial; "title of article;" title of journal; number; volume; date of publication.

#### Copies and Reprints

Authors will receive two free copies of the issue in which their article appears. Additional copies of *Oncology Issues* and/or the article are available upon request for a fee.