



Nutrition Survey Results

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In a cooperative effort with ACCC, the Society for Nutritional Oncology Adjuvant Therapy (NOAT) distributed a survey to medical directors and delegate representatives at ACCC member institutions. The survey was based on the guidelines for nutritional care of the cancer patient as published in ACCC's *Standards for Cancer Programs*.

As reported in NOAT's monthly newsletter, *Nutritional Oncology* (Vol. 2, No. 5, August 1995), the goals of the survey were to:

- compare the standards with actuality in the ACCC institutions
- assess awareness of the ACCC standards and 1995 standards of JCAHO
- assess nutritional information base and opinions concerning the relationship of nutrition and cancer care
- obtain pilot information concerning nutrition and cancer care for a more extensive survey to be distributed to oncologist members of the Cancer and Leukemia Group B (CALGB) cooperative oncology group.

A total of 679 surveys were sent to 467 member institutions. Surveys were sent to medical directors and designated delegates (at some institutions, the same person held both positions). A total of 201 responses were received (30 percent response rate). While it was hoped that the medical director or clinician delegate to whom the survey was addressed would fill out the survey, instead 53 percent of the surveys were forwarded to a second party, often a nurse or dietitian. Of the respondents stating their profession or position, the breakdown was as

follows: dietitian, 30 percent; administrator, 23 percent; nurse, 18 percent; medical oncologist, 14 percent; radiation oncologist, 4 percent; surgical oncologist, 2 percent; and other, 9 percent.

Here are the survey findings.

- Forty-seven percent reported that a dietitian or clinical nutritionist works with all cancer patients and/or their families.
- Forty-four percent reported that all their cancer patients receive a nutritional assessment during the oncology course, while 82 percent reported that all patients identified as being at risk for nutritional problems are seen by a dietitian or clinical nutritionist.
- Eighty-eight percent reported that an initial assessment is made on all patients referred for nutritional counseling, with 82 percent reporting ongoing reassessment during the oncology course.
- While 45 percent reported a full-time oncology dietitian position, 93 percent reported inpatient nutrition counseling (with 24 percent reporting charging for this service).
- Seventy-seven percent of the respondents reported that their institution has a nutrition support service.
- Forty-two percent reported that the institution has an outpatient nutrition clinic, with 90 percent reporting outpatient nutritional counseling (53 percent reporting charging for this service).
- Fifty-eight percent reported that nutrition is addressed proactively via in-house protocols.
- Only 12 percent of respondents reported monitoring oncology DRGs specific to nutrition.

In conclusion, respondents to the

ACCC STANDARDS FOR NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

- A clinical nutritionist works with all cancer patients and their families, especially those identified at risk for nutritional problems.
- The clinical nutritionist provides an initial and ongoing nutritional assessment of all referred cancer patients.
- The clinical nutritionist, in conjunction with the patient and family, manages nutrition and hydration to facilitate optimal health and comfort in the presence of disease and treatment.

survey appear to appreciate the importance of nutritional aspects of the care of cancer patients. However, many fall short of ACCC guidelines.

NOAT's mission includes promoting the "synergistic collaboration of basic scientists with nutrition and oncologic clinicians" and enhancing understanding of nutritional oncology. Society members foster quality investigation, education, and information dissemination in the field of macro and micronutrients, as well as metabolic nutritional research. For more information about NOAT or about survey results, write NOAT, P.O. Box 7805, Philadelphia, PA 19101. Or call (215) 351-4050. NOAT's fax is (215) 351-3990. ☐