Addressing Oncology Pharmacy & Policy

The landscape of cancer diagnosis, assessment, and management is ever-changing, and not just for oncology physicians. A growing army of specialists is now integral to the optimal care of patients with cancer. Pharmacists and other health care professionals who assist in the care of patients with cancer are seeing changes in innovations and issues in health care policy that affect their practices.

The growing number of oncology-trained pharmacists, nurses, physician assistants, and other health care professions who devote their career to cancer care could not have happened at a more opportune time. Oncology faces a looming shortfall of providers. The recent ASCO workforce study suggests that greatly increasing demands for oncology professionals will soon meet a shortage of people to fill those demands, which could lead to more non-oncology professionals caring for cancer patients.

Finally, in the current atmosphere of health care reform, providers in both the academic and community settings need not just clinical information but an understanding of the policies that affect their practices.

With that background, it is a pleasure to introduce the JNCCN Special Edition: NCCN Oncology Pharmacy & Policy. JNCCN: NCCN Oncology Pharmacy & Policy aims to meet these evolving oncology needs by providing information on critical topics such as how mandated Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS) will affect practices and to help pharmacists and care managers understand the changing use of oncology and supportive care drugs.

This edition of JNCCN: NCCN Oncology Pharmacy & Policy includes an update on changes for use of erythropoietin-stimulating agents and also includes an NCCN Insights Report (a follow-up to an earlier report) detailing the concerns of managed care organizations and how they are addressing cancer costs and quality by interviewing executives from 10 managed care organizations. In these interviews, the executives discuss the priority of cancer care management for their organizations and strategies they are implementing to address cost while maintaining quality.

We believe that this JNCCN Special Edition furthers JNCCN’s mission of improving the quality of cancer care, enhancing collaboration among health care providers, and disseminating information across the cancer care continuum by providing clinical specialists in oncology, including pharmacists, pharmacy directors, nurses, and physicians, with information, tools, and resources to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of patient care.

We welcome your interest in JNCCN: NCCN Oncology Pharmacy & Policy.

The ideas and viewpoints expressed in this editorial are those of the author and do not necessarily represent any policy, position, or program of the NCCN.