



## Oncology Nursing Society

125 Enterprise Drive • Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1214

Toll Free: 866-257-4ONS • Phone: 412-859-6100 • Fax: 412-859-6165

customer.service@ons.org • www.ons.org

### **Health Policy Agenda 111th Congress, 1st Session**

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS), the largest professional oncology group in the United States – composed of more than 37,000 nurses and other healthcare professionals – exists to promote excellence in oncology nursing and to ensure the provision of quality care to individuals affected by cancer.

Each year in the United States, approximately 1.44 million people are diagnosed with cancer, another 565,650 die from this terrible disease, and more than eight million Americans count themselves among the growing community of cancer survivors. Cancer has become the nation's leading cause of death; at the same time, our nation is facing an unprecedented nursing shortage of crisis proportion.

As part of its mission, ONS honors and maintains nursing's historical and essential commitment to advocacy for the public good. ONS works collaboratively with policymakers, cancer and nursing community advocates, and other stakeholders at the local, state, federal, and international levels to advance legislative, regulatory, and programmatic efforts that will reduce and prevent suffering from cancer. As part of this effort, ONS seeks the integration of the nursing perspective throughout the policymaking process and urges that oncology nurses be appointed to all relevant federal panels, committees, commissions, and boards.

**ONS respectfully calls on the U.S. Congress and the White House to:**

- **Advance and ensure access to quality, comprehensive cancer care;**
- **Bolster the nation's nursing workforce to safeguard public health; and**
- **Promote and prioritize tobacco cessation.**

#### **Advance and Ensure Access to Quality, Comprehensive Cancer Care**

While cancer is the most common cause of death in the United States, approximately two-thirds of cancer cases are preventable through lifestyle/behavioral factors and improved practice of cancer screening. Many people with cancer experience preventable side effects, symptoms, and late side effects associated with their disease and their treatment, and such side effects can have a serious adverse impact on their health, well-being, and quality of life. As such, if the healthcare community is to continue to make gains in increasing cancer survival rates, reducing cancer incidence and cancer-related morbidity, and maximizing quality of life, people with cancer must be ensured access to the full range of oncology-related care. To that end, ONS urges Congress to:

- Authorize specific and adequate Medicare reimbursement for cancer patient treatment education delivered by registered nurses to help reduce and prevent side effects and adverse events in people with cancer, as provided in the *Assuring and Improving Cancer Treatment Education and Cancer Symptom Management Act*;
- Commission an Institute of Medicine (IOM) study – as a complement to the 2007 IOM report, “*Cancer Care for the Whole Patient: Meeting Psychosocial Health Needs*” – to evaluate and make recommendations regarding the current state of symptom management, patient treatment education, and supportive care given to people with cancer;
- Provide \$33.349 billion to the National Institutes of Health; \$5.957 billion to the National Cancer Institute; \$227 million to the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities in FY 2010 to develop new cancer screening tools and treatments; and authorize and appropriate new funding to support oncology nurse-scientists and sustain and expand quality-of-life and symptom management research;
- Allocate \$471 million in FY 2010 to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support and expand its cancer screening, education, early detection, and prevention programs;
- Evaluate and recognize the contributions of nurses to patient safety and healthcare outcomes, by encouraging the collection of nursing sensitive indicators through a set of nationally standardized performance measures, as recommended by the

National Quality Forum (NQF) in its 2004 publication “National Voluntary Consensus Standards for Nursing-Sensitive Care: An Initial Performance Measure Set”;

- Expand access to high-quality clinical trials, by ensuring private and public health plans and insurers cover the routine care costs associated with participation in such research studies; and
- Enact comprehensive health reform legislation to ensure that: (1) every American has access to meaningful, comprehensive, and continuous health insurance coverage, irrespective of personal or family health history and/or pre-existing conditions; (2) all individuals have affordable access to prescription drugs, cancer screening, early detection, and risk reduction strategies and therapies (e.g., chemoprevention) appropriate for them, based on their health history, age, and other risk factors; and (3) health disparities and access challenges are addressed for at-risk and underserved populations.

### **Bolster the Nation’s Nursing Workforce to Safeguard Public Health**

Nurses directly and profoundly affect the lives of patients and play an integral role in the delivery of quality care. ONS believes the best outcomes in oncology practice are achieved through a highly-educated and skilled, experienced nursing workforce. As such, ONS urges Congress to:

- Provide \$215 million in FY 2010 for the Nurse Reinvestment Act and other Health Resources and Services Administration nursing workforce programs and \$178 million to the National Institute of Nursing Research to ensure the nation has an adequate supply of oncology nurses to provide quality care and conduct cancer research;
- Expand and prioritize funding for – and promote through authorizing legislation – programs that encourage nurses to become and serve as faculty;
- Recognize and reflect the true economic value of oncology nurses’ essential contributions to patient safety and outcomes, by ensuring that Medicare policies and payments capture and cover the full range of inpatient and outpatient oncology nursing services (e.g., patient treatment education, supportive care, and end-of-life care), including those provided by advanced practice nurses;
- Encourage health care entities to maintain nurse staffing levels that: (1) are determined with input from nurses; (2) promote patient safety; and (3) are appropriate for the patient population and acuity;
- Preserve and promote oncology nurses’ scope of practice, including within the Medicare and Medicaid programs; and
- Incorporate and include nurses and advanced practice registered nurses as integral providers in the provision, coordination, and reimbursement of care delivered as part of coordinated care models, including “medical homes.”

### **Promote and Prioritize Tobacco Cessation**

Tobacco – the nation’s leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death – annually is responsible for 30 percent of cancer deaths and \$167 billion in health care expenditures and productivity losses. To reduce and prevent the burden of tobacco on our nation, ONS urges Congress to:

- Grant meaningful and comprehensive authority to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to regulate all tobacco products;
- Increase the federal excise tax on tobacco products to help reduce tobacco consumption and initiation among all populations, particularly those most price-sensitive, such as adolescents and young adults;
- Ratify the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control – the international treaty process initiated by the World Health Organization – to ensure a strong global response to the tobacco epidemic;
- Ensure that all individuals have affordable access to the full range of proven-effective tobacco cessation strategies and therapies; and
- Provide additional funding in FY 2010 for the CDC’s Office on Smoking and Health to sustain and expand its efforts to prevent and reduce tobacco use.