



Oncology Nursing Society

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September 2, 2011

The Honorable Brian Higgins
U.S. House of Representatives
2459 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Higgins:

On behalf of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS)—the largest professional oncology group in the United States, comprised of more than 35,000 nurses and other health professionals dedicated to ensuring and advancing access to quality care for all individuals affected by cancer – we are writing to express our support for H.R. 2746, the *Cancer Drug Coverage Act of 2011*. ONS has a long history of supporting legislation that would provide adequate health insurance coverage for all Americans diagnosed with cancer; including oral anti-cancer medications.

Our members work in physician offices, as well as hospital-based settings, both inpatient and outpatient. The provision of quality, comprehensive cancer care requires a multidisciplinary team of professionals. Working alongside their physician colleagues, oncology nurses and advanced practice oncology nurses (nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists) utilize very specialized skills to coordinate and deliver the comprehensive, quality cancer treatment and supportive care people with cancer need and deserve. Specifically, oncology nurses play an essential and leadership role in administering chemotherapy drugs.

ONS members all know that insurance coverage has not been able to keep pace with the rapid growth in oral anti-cancer medications. As oral cancer treatments have become more readily available and the standard of care in many cases, the coverage structure has not adapted to address these changes. Cost-sharing imposed by health insurance plans is intended to sensitize patients to the financial consequences of their choices and encourage patients and physicians to choose less expensive and generic drugs. However, the strategy of using cost-sharing to help patients make good, cost-effective choices doesn't always work when dealing with anti-cancer medications. These decisions should be based on what is considered the most effective treatment for the patient, not just what is the most affordable.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important access to cancer care issue. If ONS can be of any assistance to you or your staff on this, or other issues, please feel free to contact us, or our Director of Health Policy, Alec Stone (412/859-6401, astone@ons.org).

Sincerely,

Carlton G. Brown, RN, PhD, AOCN
President

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