

ONS Provides Key Nursing Resources to Support Cancer Clinical Trials Recommendations

The Oncology Nursing Society's (ONS's) long-standing efforts to support clinical trials funding and access to participation are in line with recommendations offered in the Institute of Medicine's (IOM's) recent [report](#) on the Cooperative Group Program and the American Society of Clinical Oncology's (ASCO's) [response](#) to the report.

"A National Cancer Clinical Trials System for the 21st Century: Reinvigorating the NCI Cooperative Group Program," released on April 15, 2010, revealed that the National Cancer Institute's Cooperative Group trials are impeded by bureaucracy and are falling short of their potential.

ASCO responded immediately with a statement and accompanying editorial in the *New York Times* calling for increased funding and other improvements that will enable the program to accommodate evolving healthcare challenges.

ONS has advocated for increased funding for clinical trials for many years. Its [position](#) on Cancer Research and Clinical Trials recommends significant increases in federal funding of clinical trials, as well as increased access and health insurance coverage for clinical trials.

"Access to clinical trials is a critical component of our ongoing advocacy efforts," noted ONS President Brenda Nevidjon, RN, MN, FAAN. "It is especially essential that we are making clinical trials available to diverse patient populations not only to improve our understanding of treatments and side-effect management, but also so that all people have access to emerging treatments if they choose."

Nurses can play a pivotal role in implementing the recommendations through patient education, answering questions and allaying fears, and working to improve participation from a wide range of patient populations. As a result, ONS is devoted to continually updating role descriptions and practical resources for all nurses working with patients with cancer.

Oncology nursing's partnership role with physicians will be even more critical in the coming years with implementation of healthcare reform.

“The need for improvement looms especially large now that the Obama administration is pouring substantial sums into ‘comparative effectiveness research.’ That is essential to helping doctors determine which treatments work well and which do not—and holding down the cost of medical care,” the ASCO-authored editorial stated (*New York Times*, April 24, 2010).

With the average time from study development to initiation taking two and a half years and 40% of all advanced study trials never reaching completion, ASCO’s official statement calls for doubling of support for cooperative clinical research over the next five years.

“Increased federal funding for cooperative clinical research would increase the number of cancer clinical trials, increase patient enrollment, speed translation of genetic discoveries into treatments for patients, and cover the real costs of participation,” said former ASCO President Richard L. Schilsky, MD.

ONS recently released [Clinical Trials Nurse Competencies](#), which provide a listing of the fundamental knowledge and skills that novice oncology clinical trials nurses should possess or acquire during their first one to two years in the role.

In addition, ONS’s latest webcourse, [Shedding Light on Clinical Research: An Introduction to Clinical Trials Nursing](#), is designed for oncology nurses new to clinical trials and provides a combination of didactic content and hands-on activities to help learners gain the knowledge and skills required for success as a clinical trials nurse. ONS also offers the second edition of [Manual for Clinical Trials Nursing](#), intended to add clarity and perspective to the rapidly changing landscape of clinical trials nursing. The book examines budgets, compassionate use of protocol drugs, designing computerized tools to verify eligibility, and electronic data capture, among other key areas.