



Oncology Nursing Society

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Oncology Nursing Society Legislative and Regulatory Health Policy Agenda 116th Congress, 1st Session

ONS honors and maintains nursing's historic 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, and federal levels to advance legislative, regulatory, and programmatic efforts that will reduce and prevent suffering from cancer. As part of this effort, ONS seeks to integrate the nursing perspective throughout the policymaking process and urges that oncology nurses be appointed to all relevant federal panels, committees, commissions, and boards.

Quality Cancer Care

According to the American Cancer Society (ACS, 2018), cancer is the nation's second most common cause of death. In 2019 in the United States, an estimated 1.7 million people will be diagnosed with cancer; another 609,640 will die from the disease; and more than 15.5 million Americans, nearly 1 in 20, will count themselves among the growing community of cancer survivors (National Cancer Institute, 2018). ONS calls on Congress and the Administration* to advance the quality of cancer care in the following ways:

- Advocate for transformative research in advancing cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment to achieve the goals of the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative.
- Promote comprehensive treatment education, personalized cancer care planning, and awareness.
- Ensure access to palliative care and appropriate pain management, including psychosocial services.
- Support access to cancer screening, medication, and treatment, including reimbursement parity for oral cancer drugs. Enact the Oral Cancer Drug Parity Act.
- Encourage the development of drugs to treat cancers, including incentives for drugs to treat pediatric cancers.
- Encourage prevention and reduction of tobacco use, as well as e-cigarettes, and ensure affordable access to the full range of proven-effective cessation strategies and therapies.
- Increase federal funding for the following:
 - Cancer research at the National Institutes of Health, including the National Cancer Institute and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. Authorize and appropriate new funding to support oncology nurse scientists and sustain and expand quality-of-life, palliative care, and symptom management research.
 - Research and research training at the National Institute of Nursing Research that builds the scientific foundation for clinical practice, prevents disease and disability, manages and eliminates symptoms caused by illness, and improves palliative and end-of-life care.
 - Screening, education, early detection, and prevention programs through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Sustain funding for education and awareness programs through the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.
- Accelerate the development of innovative cancer care delivery and payment models that improve access to and the provision of quality cancer care and treatment.
- Fund the development of appropriate, risk-adjusted quality and resource use measures for cancer care and delivery and support mechanisms for reporting key quality and resource use data to federal agencies.
- Expand access to primary care, chronic care management, and advance care planning services by supporting reimbursement and other policies that facilitate the provision of those services by oncology nurses.
- Accelerate the establishment and adoption of robust data and interoperability standards, as well as "meaningful use" and certification criteria, for health information technologies, such as electronic health records (EHRs), clinical data registries and digital health applications.

- Facilitate innovative approaches to developing cancer treatments that take into account individual differences in genetics, environments, and lifestyles, and support comparative effectiveness research.
- Eliminate policies that hinder information and access to provider-directed applications of approved therapies.
- Promulgate policies that support transparent labeling of biosimilars and appropriate provider notification when biosimilars are substituted for biologics.

Patient and Staff Safety

Quality cancer care must ensure patient and staff safety. ONS calls on Congress and the Administration to:

- Ensure safe staffing and a safe work environment.
- Establish mechanisms to facilitate the reporting of adverse events associated with the use of health information technology in cancer care delivery and treatment.

The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2010) recommended that the United States do the following: “Prepare and enable nurses to lead change to advance health. Nurses, nursing education programs, and nursing associations should prepare the nursing workforce to assume leadership positions across all levels, while public, private, and governmental health care decision makers should ensure that leadership positions are available to and filled by nurses” (pp. 282–283).

Workforce and Education

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 strives to support its membership in grassroots advocacy to engage with their federal legislators, and to seek nominations for oncology nurses to serve on relevant federal panels, committees, commissions, and boards.

ONS calls on Congress and the Administration to support federal nursing workforce funding and policies and to recognize the important contributions of oncology nursing. To advance these goals, Congress should do the following:

- Enact the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act, which would encourage education in hospice and palliative nursing and establish programs for advanced practice nurses to train and teach in that area.
- Reauthorize and increase federal funding for the Nurse Education Act (Title VIII, Public Health Service Act).

Value of Oncology Nurses

To maintain a robust oncology nursing workforce, it is imperative that federal policies 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, end-of-life care), including those provided by advanced practice nurses.

Scope of Practice

To provide the most comprehensive, cost-effective care, oncology nurses must be able to practice to their full licensure and training. ONS calls on Congress and the Administration to preserve and promote oncology nurses’ scope of practice, including within the Medicare and Medicaid programs, ensuring that nurses can practice to the full extent of their licensure and that reimbursement policy is inclusive of nursing.

* The term Administration refers to the White House and other federal agencies, such the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

References

American Cancer Society. (2018). *Cancer facts and figures, 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2018/cancer-facts-and-figures-2018.pdf>

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