



117th Congress, 1st session

Patient Access to Quality Cancer Care

ONS calls on the U.S. Congress and the Administration to improve access to cancer screening, safe and affordable cancer drugs, radiotherapy, and surgery through:

- Accelerating the development of innovative cancer care delivery and payment models that improve access to and the provision of cancer care and treatment.
- Passage of the [Cancer Drug Parity Act](#), which would provide reimbursement parity for oral cancer drugs.
- Enactment of the [Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act](#) and the [Safe Step Act](#), which would reduce the burdens of prior authorization and place reasonable limits on insurer use of step therapy.
- Passage of the [Lymphedema Treatment Act](#), which would provide Medicare coverage of durable medical equipment (DME) lymphedema compression treatment items.
- Funding the development of appropriate, risk-adjusted quality and resource use measures for cancer care and delivery and support for mechanisms for reporting key quality and resource use data to federal agencies.
- Incentivizing the development of drugs, including biosimilars, to treat pediatric cancers.
- Eliminating the disparity in preventable cancer deaths among underserved populations facing barriers to cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and survivorship care.

Cancer Prevention

Oncology nurses play an integral role in disseminating public health education and disease prevention. ONS will work to encourage the U.S. Congress and the Administration to:

- Increase federal funding for screening, education, early detection, and prevention programs through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including tobacco and e-cigarette or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) prevention and control efforts.
- Ensure barrier-free cessation insurance coverage to increase the availability and utilization of treatment services for smoking cessation as outlined in the U.S. Surgeon General's smoking cessation [report](#).
- Address the role of social determinants of health in access to advances in cancer prevention and early detection services.

Workforce and Education

ONS recommends the U.S. Congress and the Administration to:

- Enact the [Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act](#) (PCHETA), which would improve palliative care and hospice training for nurses and other health professionals, and establish programs for advanced practice nurses to train and teach in palliative care nursing, home care, hospice, long-term care, and other areas.
- Ensure sustained federal funding for the **Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development** programs.

Patient and Staff Safety

ONS urges the U.S. Congress and the Administration to protect and support nurses on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is essential that nurses have an **adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE)**. Policymakers should also work to:

- **Promote access to virtual care and telehealth** by ensuring permanent coverage, expansion of services, and support for technology and resources to advance this mode of health care.

- Ensure policies that expand access to home infusion of cancer treatment **prioritize clinical appropriateness and the safety of patients, families, and healthcare workers.**
- Prioritize the provision of culturally competent and culturally safe clinical practice regardless of health care setting.

Research

ONS advocates for transformative research in advancing cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment to achieve the goals of the **National Cancer Moonshot Initiative**, and encourages the U.S. Congress and the Administration to:

- Address the outcome disparities that disproportionately affect minority populations, including risk factors such as provider biases, poor provider-patient communication, lower levels of health literacy, and inconsistent CLAS implementation.
- Sustain funding for health disparity education and awareness programs at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) including those that address health disparities in cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.
- Facilitate innovative approaches to developing cancer treatments that take into account individual differences in genetics, environments, and lifestyles, and support comparative effectiveness research.
- Support efforts to increase access to clinical trials among populations that are typically underrepresented in current clinical trial enrollment and ensure coverage of routine costs associated with participation in clinical trials.
- Increase federal funding for:
 - Research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD); authorize and appropriate new funding to support oncology nurse scientists and sustain and expand quality-of-life, palliative care, and symptom management research.
 - Research at the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) 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.

Scope of Practice

For patients to access the most comprehensive, cost-effective care, oncology nurses must be able to practice to their full licensure and training. Through the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), federal and state agencies eased practice restrictions, maximizing access to care during the pandemic. ONS calls on the U.S. Congress and the Administration to **preserve these flexibilities and promote oncology nurses' scope of practice, especially with regards to new and innovative models of care delivery**, within the Medicare, Medicaid, and Veterans programs. In addition, we urge the U.S. Congress and the Administration to ensure reimbursement policy is inclusive of nursing, which would include requiring APRNs to bill directly for services provided and abolishing incident-to billing.

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, including those provided by advanced practice nurses. ONS advocates for **reimbursement and other policies that facilitate the provision of primary care, chronic care management, and advance care planning services by oncology nurses**. ONS also seeks to integrate the nursing perspective throughout the policymaking process and urges that oncology nurses be **nominated and appointed to all relevant state and federal panels, committees, commissions, and boards**.