



Oncology Nursing Society

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May 16, 2023

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Submitted via email: Chiquita.Brooks-LaSure@cms.hhs.gov

RE: Implementation of the *Lymphedema Treatment Act*

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

Oncology nurses are privileged to support people with cancer through their entire cancer experience, whether that through treatment and into survivorship or as they face their end-of-life journey. Today, the Oncology Nursing Society writes to provide perspectives on an important chronic condition that many cancer patients face as part of their treatment and for which the Agency will soon address through rulemaking.

Lymphedema is a chronic condition affecting millions of Americans and is most often caused by cancer treatments that damage the body's lymph system or immune functions. Due to the painful swelling that results from lymphedema, compression therapy is an essential component of treatment. With passage of the *Lymphedema Treatment Act*, Medicare will now cover lymphedema compression treatment items used in the medical treatment of lymphedema and prescribed by a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or a clinical nurse specialist, as part of the durable medical equipment benefit. Items covered would include custom or standard fit gradient compression garments and other devices determined by the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services to be effective in the prevention or treatment of lymphedema.

As the Agency drafts its implementing regulations, ONS would like to emphasize that Medicare's coverage policies must be commensurate with each beneficiary's medical needs and ensure access without unnecessary burden or delay. While one breast cancer survivor may need only a standard fit garment for a single arm, another may require custom garments for both arms, both hands, and the breast/chest area to adequately manage their lymphedema. To avoid delays in lymphedema care and treatment, CMS should not impose prior authorization or other utilization management requirements. In addition, CMS should not limit, or impose limitations that would hinder, beneficiary access to additional garments that may be needed during treatment. Worsening or improving lymphedema may require new garments to continue treating the condition effectively. Finally, CMS must ensure accessibility to garments that best match the individual's skin coloring, and without additional out-of-pocket cost.

We appreciate your consideration of these important issues as the agency drafts proposals to implement the legislation. If CMS has any questions or would like to discuss these comments in more detail, please contact Alec Stone, ONS Director of Government Affairs, at astone@ons.org.

Sincerely,

The Oncology Nursing Society

About ONS

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) is a professional organization of over 39,000 registered nurses and other healthcare providers dedicated to excellence in patient care, education, research, and administration in oncology nursing. ONS members are a diverse group of professionals who represent a variety of professional roles, practice settings, and subspecialty practice areas. Oncology nurses are leaders in the healthcare arena, committed to continuous learning and leading the transformation of cancer care by advocating for high-quality care for people with cancer.