Access to Quality Cancer Care

Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the United States. “Approximately 77% of all cancer diagnoses occur in people aged 55 or older” (American Cancer Society, 2014). Access to quality cancer care is the right of all people. Quality care requires safety, efficacy, timeliness, a patient-centered approach coordinated by a multidisciplinary team, and the integration of evidence-based practice to continuously improve care (Institute of Medicine, 2010). Without essential services targeted at reducing cancer risk, morbidity, and mortality, patients with cancer may suffer from decreased quality of life or less-than-optimal outcomes. Those services are prevention, early detection, risk reduction, clinical trials, treatment, palliative care, psychosocial care, survivorship, and end-of-life care.

Healthcare coverage, including Medicare and the 2010 Affordable Care Act, is essential in providing access to services that ensure quality cancer care. Lack of insurance or inadequate healthcare coverage adversely impacts health on multiple levels. The uninsured are less likely to receive preventive care and more likely to receive inadequate or delayed treatment and die prematurely than people with health insurance coverage.

To ensure quality cancer care, the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) affirms the substantive role of oncology nurses in decision making and the integration of oncology nursing as an equal administrative and practice partner in the planning and implementation of cancer care services.

It is the position of ONS that

- The provision of comprehensive healthcare coverage with respect to cancer prevention, cancer risk assessment, risk reduction services, genetic counseling, and genetic predisposition testing, and early detection is available to everyone through continuous health insurance coverage, irrespective of personal or family health history or preexisting conditions.
- The provision of accessible and affordable healthcare coverage includes consumer choice and control, including providing the patient with information about the cost of treatment options and allowing for informed treatment decisions.
- Evidence-based conventional and integrative therapies, including regimens incorporating the use of off-label therapies approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for other indications, comprehensive symptom management and palliative care, psychosocial care, long-term survivorship, and rehabilitation services, are options for every patient with cancer.
- All individuals have affordable access to the full range of proven-effective tobacco cessation strategies and therapies.
- Services provided by professional oncology nurses who are competent in the essentials of oncology nursing and the administration of oncologic therapies, comprehensive patient and family education, palliative care, adherence monitoring and the services provided by advanced practice oncology nurses competent in providing treatment to those with cancer, especially the prevention and management of treatment-related toxicities are accessible and eligible for reimbursement.
- Health disparities and access to care and treatment challenges are addressed for at-risk and underserved populations and appropriate referrals are made to community resources.
- Everyone, regardless of age, gender, race, or ethnicity, has the opportunity to participate in clinical trials for cancer prevention and comprehensive cancer care, including those coordinated by nurses educated and certified in oncology nursing, allowing for continuing informed consent.

continue...
Statement Type
Health Care Policy and Consumer Advocacy

References
