

Medicare Payment for Cancer Patient Treatment Education

ACCC Position:

The Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) believes that patients and their caregivers should have in-person instruction about their plan of care, therapies/medications, and potential symptoms, as well as have access to services and management associated with the alleviation of those symptoms. ACCC, along with other organizations have found that individuals with cancer often do not receive adequate education in advance of the onset of their treatment about their course of care and the possible side effects and symptoms they may experience. In order to achieve a better adherence to care planning and education, ACCC believes that Medicare should be amended to provide coverage of comprehensive cancer patient treatment education services.

Issue:

Many people with cancer experience side effects, symptoms, and late side effects associated with their disease and their treatment, and such effects can have a serious adverse impact on the effectiveness of their treatment, their health, well-being, and quality of life. Every day, oncology nurses witness the suffering which patients experience, caused by the side effects of cancer treatment and the symptoms of cancers themselves. Nurse education of patients and their caregivers about what symptoms to expect or watch for, when and how to contact their physicians and nurses, and how to manage their conditions and symptoms can help ensure that the side effects of cancer and its treatment are moderated, alleviated, and/or prevented. Such education empowers patients and their caregivers; helps to optimize treatment outcomes; decreases adverse events, office visits, and hospitalizations; and substantially reduces costs in an already burdened health system.

Additional Information:

ACCC supported efforts to pass the “Assuring and Improving Cancer Treatment Education and Cancer Symptom Management Act of 2009,” HR 1927 from the 111th Congress. The bill would:

- Amend Medicare to provide for coverage of comprehensive cancer patient treatment education services;
- Expand federal research on cancer symptom management and its improvement; and
- Provide for an Institute of Medicine report on cancer symptom management.

About ACCC:

The Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) promotes the entire continuum of quality cancer care for our patients and our communities. Nearly 17,000 cancer care professionals from approximately 900 hospitals and more than 1,200 private practices are affiliated with ACCC. It is estimated that 60 percent of cancer patients nationwide are treated by a member of ACCC.