

Investing in Our Oncology Workforce

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We live in a time of great progress in the field of oncology. Advances in research and development are leading to cutting-edge treatments that are allowing people with cancer to

live long and healthy lives. Yet, this complex and evolving field is also one of the biggest challenges facing the oncology workforce. New treatments and new technologies mean that oncology professionals need to constantly learn and adapt to provide the best possible care for their patients. In addition to keeping up with the latest information on new treatments and technologies, oncology professionals must also be familiar with other factors that significantly impact patient care, including reimbursement models and regulations, restrictive payer policies, and sociodemographic barriers, such as transportation and food insecurity.

Another challenge facing the oncology workforce is the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to increased workload, stress, and burnout. In addition, delayed access to cancer screening during the pandemic means more patients are presenting with advanced cancers, placing further strain on the oncology workforce.

To overcome these challenges, we must reimagine how we deliver care and invest in a workforce that is equipped and ready to provide quality patient care.

There are several steps we can take to prepare our oncology workforce for these challenges. First, we must invest in education and training. With new drugs and treatment modalities approved with increasing regularity, healthcare workers must learn how to effectively manage information. We must develop and operationalize innovative approaches that help cancer care teams navigate a vast amount of information and resources and ensure that they receive the right information at the right time.


Second, we must embrace technology to help us manage the administrative burdens that come with cancer care. For example, technologies, such

as artificial intelligence, are proving vital in automating repetitive tasks and in providing clinical and business decision support. Smart use of technology promises to reduce the workload of cancer care teams and help these professionals work at the top of their licenses and capabilities.

Third, we must support our oncology workforce. This support means providing the resources these professionals need to do their jobs. It also means providing the mental health services that these professionals need to cope with the emotional challenges of working in oncology.

Finally, we must develop a new generation of leaders who can help build systems and think creatively about clinical and operational models that improve communication, collaboration, and the quality of life of our oncology workforce.

Under the auspices of my 2023-2024 Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) President's Theme: (Re)Building the Oncology Workforce to Deliver Next Generation Care, ACCC will be developing tools and resources to support all these efforts, including a special track devoted to workforce development at the ACCC 40th National Oncology Conference, October 4-6, 2023, in Austin, Texas. Sessions will address topics like developing an oncology pipeline, improving your recruitment efforts and processes, keeping up with compensation best practices, taking your recruitment program to the next level, hardwiring the employee relationship through effective leadership, and more.

I hope to see many of you in Austin because—despite the challenges facing the oncology workforce—it is a time of hope and optimism. The lessons we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic provide unique opportunities to rebuild a stronger and more nimble oncology workforce. I am excited to be a part of this journey. I am excited to be a part of reimagining the oncology workforce. I am excited to be a part of the future of oncology. 

Coming in Your 2023 ONCOLOGY ISSUES

- ▶ Trending Now in Cancer Care Part II
- ▶ A Virtual Reality Intervention for Anxiety Relief During Initial Chemotherapy Treatment
- ▶ Participation in Fall Risk Self-Assessment by Hospitalized Oncology Patients
- ▶ Pioneering a Cancer Program of the Future: Novel Approaches to Optimize the Patient Experience
- ▶ Human-Centered Design: A Solution to Rural Clinical Trial Enrollment
- ▶ Development of a Cancer Center Support Group Training Program
- ▶ Coordinating RECIST 1.1: A Community Hospital Perspective
- ▶ Development of a Model Tobacco Cessation Program
- ▶ Pancreatic Cancer and Community Engagement: A Scoping Review of the Literature
- ▶ e-Consults for Immune-Related Endocrine Toxicities Reduce Appointment Access Time and Prevent Hospital Admissions
- ▶ An Advanced Practice Radiation Therapist Role Improves Quality, Efficiency, Wellness & Administrative Outcomes
- ▶ Closing the Testing Gap: Standardization of Comprehensive Biomarker Testing in NSCLC