



State Affiliate News

Grant Program Benefits Oncology Communities

This past year, the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) State Affiliate Grant Program provided \$70,000 in financial support to state/regional affiliates to assist them in implementing specific programs and activities that benefit their oncology communities. Since 2005, the program has awarded more than \$200,000 in funds.

The focus of the collaborative projects includes better communication for the oncology community, training and education, measurement of membership priorities, and creation of a system to enhance the role of midlevel providers.

Arkansas Clinical Oncology Association Develops Web Site and Database

Arkansas Clinical Oncology Association (ACOA) developed a centralized Web site and database to increase awareness of its services to physicians and the community. The design should help build relationships with other cancer-related nonprofits in the state to help in collaboration with education, screening, and posting information. “The goal was to develop something that could potentially be so useful that every oncologist in the state of Arkansas would want to use it as their home page,” says state society president Daniel S. Bradford, MD. From that home page, access could be obtained to ASCO’s Web site, as well as other oncology organizations. News and meeting information for ACOA, ASCO, and other cancer organizations are displayed and placed on the calendar. The ACOA Web site links to many cancer-related organizations for updates on new drugs, patient assistance sites, clinical trials, the National Institutes of Health, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. “Although we haven’t accomplished all of our goals, we have the tool in place to do so. We will continue to enhance the site until ultimately it will be useful to and supportive of the entire oncology community in the state of Arkansas,” he adds.

Florida Society of Clinical Oncology Creates Educational Program Addressing Nonphysician Practitioners

Florida Society of Clinical Oncology (FLASCO) created a three-pronged program to demonstrate the benefit of multidisciplinary cancer care to meet Florida’s growing needs among patients with cancer. “Although this is a very early ‘pilot’ program, we have had a tremendous amount of interest as evidenced by a large turnout at our first conference held this past March at Moffitt Cancer Center,” says Gerald Robbins, MD, FLASCO state society president. “It is our way of addressing the future critical manpower shortages that have been repeatedly predicted. We want to establish a focus on the specialty of oncology and establish a training process for physician assistants

[PAs] and advanced registered nurse practitioners [ARNPs] to increase the number that will specialize in oncology. We hope to see an increase in midlevel providers available to work with physicians in patient care.” By also adding senior-level positions on the FLASCO executive committee for a PA and ARNP, the society includes those perspectives in planning for future oncology initiatives and encourages their participation as part of an oncology team, he adds.

The long-term goal is to have ARNPs and PAs available to assist in patient care, which benefits patients and caregivers on all levels. “We are still learning from this project; it is a work in progress,” Robbins says. “The physician community cannot operate effectively in a vacuum. Physicians can provide good patient care, but when we work as a team with multilevel caregivers, we can provide great patient care.”

Georgia Society of Clinical Oncology Enhances Opportunities for Clinical Trial Support Personnel

Georgia Society of Clinical Oncology (GASCO) created several programs to educate support personnel on cancer clinical trials. “The ability to perform clinical research with the highest level of quality and still keep it revenue neutral is a major concern for oncologists,” says Matthew Mumber, MD, society president. “We are fortunate to have the Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education as a partner to guide clinical and administrative training of clinical research associates and new principal investigators.” This project demonstrated that a partnership between an ASCO affiliate and an oncology-focused nonprofit can deliver a highly effective educational experience concerning regulatory and clinical expertise related to oncology research. GASCO is in the process of building on the success of this initial educational offering through a more broad partnership with Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education. “This partnership will have several discrete and measurable goals: expansion of multidisciplinary GASCO membership; improvement of GASCO educational offerings with regards to attendance, practical relevance, and quality; and a focus on statewide clinical oncologist–driven disease-specific groups to develop clinical trials, which will then be initiated and accrued through a statewide network,” he adds.

Hawaii Society of Clinical Oncology Provides Patient Information in Native Dialects

Hawaii Society of Clinical Oncology successfully produced a DVD in Tagalog and Ilokano languages for Filipinos with cancer. The DVD includes patient stories; a general discussion about chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, and clinical trials; and

disease-specific information about the six most common cancers for Filipinos living in Hawaii. Those are breast, lung, colon, thyroid, prostate, and liver cancers. “The DVD has a powerful impact because it contains real people with real stories,” says William Loui, MD, society president.

“We had focus groups which brought insightful comments about barriers to access, reasons for noncompliance, and emotional responses,” Loui explains. “This has been a true community project. The project used volunteers from the Hawaii Society of Clinical Oncology, Cancer Research Center of Hawaii, American Cancer Society, University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine, Asian American Network for Cancer Awareness, Research, and Training, and the University of Hawaii Language Department. The Hawaii Society of Clinical Oncology, American Cancer Society, and Friends of the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii provided matching funds.”

“We plan to distribute the DVD to health clinics, primary care doctors, and cancer centers,” Loui notes. The society will have the video segments available on Web sites to make the information accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Northern New England Clinical Oncology Society Examines Rural Oncology Care

Northern New England Clinical Oncology Society, representing oncologists in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, conducted a unique collaborative epidemiologic study evaluating indicators of quality care in patients with breast and colon cancers to assess whether limits to oncology care and access exist in rural and urban areas of the tri-state region. Using state cancer registry data from 2003 and 2004, the study retrospectively evaluated quality-of-care issues in diagnosis, staging, and disease management. The participants included three separate state registries, 79 hospitals and all of their registries, and three state cancer coalitions, as well as the American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Cancer Institute.

“With an uncertain future for oncologic service reimbursement, it is essential that rural areas are able to provide adequate access to oncology care,” notes J. Chris Nunnink, MD, principal investigator and society past president. “Any disruption of the fragile network in place may interfere with patients being able to receive quality cancer care.” This study examined benchmarks to determine whether patients have adequate access to care, and more importantly, whether this access will either improve or worsen. The project team hopes that the data will serve as a foundation for future planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities targeted toward improving access to high-quality oncologic care throughout the region.

Pennsylvania Society of Oncology and Hematology Examines Regional Issues

Pennsylvania Society of Oncology and Hematology conducted town hall meetings that included leaders of large oncology practices, heads of hospital cancer centers, a practice manager from a small oncology practice, cancer surgeons, and radiation on-

cologists. The key concerns identified by the community included the connection between reimbursement, drug selection, and drug availability; the need to increase the availability of well-trained physician extenders; and the impact reimbursement policies for durable medical equipment and medical supplies have on patient care and patient quality of life. The society will develop a strategic plan targeting key issues.

“The project gave the oncology community a forum to speak its concerns. It’s an unusual forum that requests and pursues a need to know just what is troubling your clinical practice,” says Ed Balaban, DO, state society president. “From that perspective, the community got a chance to relay its concerns as well as hear concerns from others in the room. Perhaps one of the major things we learned as a society is actually in the topics that were not echoed,” he notes. For instance, they did not hear of practices failing. “We heard of threats in that direction, but nothing as substantial as I believe is going on elsewhere in the nation,” he says.

Washington State Medical Oncology Society Analyzes Midlevel Providers

Washington State Medical Oncology Society analyzed the use of midlevel providers in the state and started to build a directory of practices and educational institutions for medical personnel. The grant, and the study that it funded, helped the oncology community by making it easier for a practice to network with other practices about ways to integrate ARNPs and PAs into

2008-2009 State Affiliate Grant Recipients

Denali Oncology Group, Alaska—Interactive Web Site Development

Georgia Society of Clinical Oncology—Assessment of Organizational Resources and Constituents for Formation of a Cancer Navigators’ Association in Georgia as an Affiliate of GASCO

Maryland/DC Society of Clinical Oncology—Project Collaborate (develop social network site)

New York State Society of Medical Oncologists and Hematologists—Outreach Program: Meeting the Needs of the Practicing Oncologist in 2009

Northern New England Clinical Oncology Society—Clinical Trials Barrier Study

2009-2010 State Affiliate Grant Application

Opened: August 26, 2009 Closes: November 17, 2009

All 48 ASCO state/regional affiliates are eligible to apply for a grant in an amount up to \$10,000. The online application must be submitted by either the state society president or the executive director/administrator by the deadline to be considered.

practices. (The grant also resulted in an article slated for the January 2010 issue of *Journal of Oncology Practice*.) “Now we have a forum that will at least allow us to explore it anecdotally in order to try and identify best practices,” says Jeffrey Ward, MD, society president.

Oncologists can also access information about training programs in Washington that educate ARNPs and PAs. The society learned that there is a clear opportunity to partner with some of these training programs to offer oncology experience to their graduates. Some of these programs identified through this project demonstrate that there is an unmet need that they can help fill, Ward

adds. “The society learned a tremendous amount about the logistics of surveying membership and the training programs,” he says. It now has a methodology in place to survey Washington State Medical Oncology Society members quickly about questions of interest and importance, a tool that may prove valuable as it tries to assess the impact of impending health care reform, for example.

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