American Cancer Society Launches Training and Credentialing Program to Standardize and Support High-Quality Oncology Patient Navigation

The American Cancer Society Leadership in Oncology Navigation program helps navigation professionals and oncology organizations build sustainable patient navigation services to improve cancer outcomes

ATLANTA, February 28, 2024 - Today, the American Cancer Society announced the launch of the American Cancer Society Leadership in Oncology Navigation (ACS LION™) program, a national training and credentialing program that is working with oncology organizations to standardize high-quality, expert patient navigation for persons with cancer and their caregivers. Oncology navigation professionals work with patients within clinics and community-based settings, from abnormal finding through survivorship, to assist in guiding them past barriers that might impact receiving the best cancer outcomes. Achieving consistent, reliable cancer navigation nationwide requires standardization of training that adheres to best practices.

The ACS LION program offers the American Cancer Society's expertise to train and credential navigators in core competencies that align with workforce standards and provide implementation support for oncology organizations interested in sustainable navigation. To widely train their navigation workforce, the following oncology organizations have signed on as the program's initial partners:

- Duke Cancer Institute Supportive Care & Survivorship Center
- Mount Sinai Tisch Cancer Center
- Penn Medicine's Abramson Cancer Center
- Thyme Care
- The US Oncology Network

A widely recognized intervention in addressing cancers disparities, oncology navigation helps individuals, caregivers and families through cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship, but equitable adoption of navigation services has been a challenge. Until January 1, 2024, nonclinical services have not been covered by Medicare or qualified as a reimbursable expense by most commercial health insurance, making it unavailable or dependent upon philanthropic or administrative budget support and subject to changing funding climates. Additionally, programs that have the financial resources to offer navigation differ in the quality and consistency of navigation services due to community needs, populations served, organizational setting and available infrastructure and staffing.

"Every person diagnosed with cancer should have access to high-quality navigation across the cancer continuum," said Dr. Arif Kamal, chief patient officer for the American Cancer Society. "Navigation by trained professionals has been consistently proven to enhance access to personalized and timely cancer care while promoting health equity for all populations. Using the American Cancer Society's expertise in navigation to train and credential others is an important part of helping expand the nation's capacity for cancer navigation while contributing to the standardization of best practices in this critical area of care."

Recent changes to the Medicare Physician Fee schedule have opened a pathway to reimbursement of professional, non-clinical navigation services, allowing oncology organizations to sustain professional navigators or create new programs, but standardized training and credentialing is required. The ACS LION program meets the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) training requirements for "Principal Illness Navigation" reimbursement and is aligned to professional oncology navigation (PONT) standards. Through focusing on credentialing and working with oncology organizations on capacity building, the goal of the program is to improve comprehensive care for oncology patients and their families by supporting the advancement and sustainability of the navigation profession.

The American Cancer Society has played a key role in shaping and sustaining the field of patient navigation to address cancer disparities for more than 30 years, specifically through support of its National Navigation

Roundtable and patient navigation capacity building grants initiative. The organization also works with its advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), to promote policies that expand sustainable access to patient navigation, supports navigation globally through its BEACON initiative, and recently, launched ACS CARES, a customizable program that delivers non-clinical navigation through volunteers and a mobile app. For more information, visit cancer.org/lion.

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About the American Cancer Society
The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 100 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit cancer.org or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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