

Patients' Bill of Rights for Quality Cancer Care

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS), a professional association representing more than 29,000 registered nurses and other healthcare professionals specializing in cancer care, believes that quality cancer care is a right of all individuals. These rights include

- Availability and access to education about cancer risks and lifestyle changes that influence the incidence of cancer, including educational activities that are effective and appropriate for diverse populations.
- Receipt of information in a timely manner in terms that can be understood, including unbiased analysis and interpretation of data; assistance in interpreting information relevant to medical status and treatment; and ample opportunity to ask questions.
- Reimbursement of screening activities that facilitates the early detection of cancer when a greater potential for cure exists, including the use of genetic testing and counseling if the patient so chooses. These screening activities should be tailored to individual risk factors, including family history, age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status.
- Timely access to and healthcare coverage for the appropriate spectrum of treatment options provided in the most appropriate setting for the management of the specific cancer and symptoms, with active participation in treatment decision making in an informed manner. These treatment options include but are not limited to surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, hormonal therapies, marrow and peripheral blood stem cell transplant, complementary therapies, rehabilitative therapies, and appropriate psychosocial services.
- Administration of cancer care by qualified health-

care providers, with specialized knowledge, who successfully complete ongoing programs that demonstrate their competency.

- Access to adequate healthcare coverage for supportive therapies that help to decrease the side effects from cancer treatments.
- Access to and healthcare coverage for the routine care costs for scientifically sound and culturally relevant clinical trials that follow research guidelines, provide informed consent agreements, and yield information to advance the implementation of effective screening, diagnostic, and treatment modalities.
- Access to long-term follow-up by oncology specialists that focuses on health promotion, prompt detection and treatment of cancer recurrence, and the evaluation and identification of physical and psychosocial effects of cancer and its treatment.
- Availability of palliative care modalities that improve quality at the end of life, with a focus on symptom management, excellent pain control, psychosocial support for patients and families, hospice care, and bereavement counseling. This care must be provided in a manner that respects the individual's cultural, spiritual, and ethical needs.
- Respect for confidentiality consistent with legal and ethical guidelines.
- Access to care that is culturally competent. To be seen, heard, and respected as individuals, with individual differences related to needs and preferences as well as cancer characteristics.

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revised 10/00; revised 12/00.*

To obtain copies of the ONS position "Patients' Bill of Rights for Quality Cancer Care," contact the Customer Service Center at the ONS National Office at 501 Holiday Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15220-2749 (412-921-7373). Positions also may be downloaded from ONS Online (www.ons.org).