Patient and Provider Use of Electronic Care Plans Generated From Patient-Reported Outcomes

Jeannine M. Brant, PhD, APRN, AOCN®, FAAN, Karen B. Hirschman, PhD, MSW, Sarahlena L. Keckler, BS, William N. Dudley, PhD, and Carrie Stricker, PhD, RN, AOCN®

Symptoms are common across the cancer trajectory, from diagnosis and treatment through to survivorship and/or end of life. Symptom assessment has historically been completed by clinicians whose findings may not coincide with patient reports. Findings from an integrative review of 36 studies on patient-reported outcome (PRO) measures revealed that clinicians tend to underestimate the prevalence, severity, and distress of patients’ symptoms (Xiao, Polomano, & Bruner, 2013). Lowest congruence was found in symptoms not easily observed, such as depression and anxiety. Data also suggest that incorporating PRO symptom measurement during treatment can improve patient–provider communication (Berry et al., 2011) and patient outcomes, such as reducing symptom burden (Mooney et al., 2017) and improving quality of life and survival (Basch, Deal, et al., 2017; Denis et al., 2019; Loh et al., 2018). Overall, a need exists for PROs to be incorporated into daily clinical practice using real-time, self-reported descriptions of the patient experience. In turn, clinicians need support to incorporate PROs into patient care. The inclusion of oncology nurses in this workflow appears to be crucial to achievement of outcomes (Mooney et al., 2017).

Implementation of symptom PROs into cancer care remains challenging. A scoping review by Howell et al. (2015) found that PROs were acceptable to patients with cancer, their providers, and nurses, and that PROs enabled earlier detection of symptoms and problems; however, significant implementation barriers were identified, including time constraints, increased visit times, and perceptions that PROs were intrusive and had questionable use. Other barriers included lack of knowledge about how to address information gathered and liability issues for PROs reported between visits (Howell et al., 2015). Mooney et al. (2017) found that assignment of a dedicated oncology nursing resource helped overcome these barriers.