ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Recommendations from an American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) “Summit on Addressing Obesity through Multidisciplinary Collaboration” have been published in a new article in Obesity. The recommendations cover four key areas in response to the current issues providers face in addressing obesity prevention and treatment and its impact on morbidity and mortality in the United States.

ASCO convened 18 organizations across a wide spectrum of medical specialties in 2016 to take a full view of obesity’s impact on health. These organizations share a commitment to improving health outcomes by considering obesity as a comorbidity in their specific disease areas and in some cases providing obesity treatment. The article outlines the current needs, recommendations for collaboration, and best practice examples generated from the Summit to collectively move forward to address obesity.

“Many healthcare organizations have focused on obesity prevention and management for some time, creating education, tools and resources for their respective provider communities. The 2016 meeting was held to bring these groups together to share research, experiences, and ideas to identify priority action areas where all of the organizations could benefit from collaboration to address the growing challenge of obesity” said Jennifer Ligibel, MD, Chair of the ASCO Obesity and Energy Balance Subcommittee and one of the report’s
authors. “We believe that the tactics developed at this summit can serve as a blueprint for delivering care with a focus on obesity not only in oncology, but also in the context of many other diseases and conditions.”

The increasing rates of obesity have important implications for patients, healthcare providers, and public health in the US. Obesity increases the risk of many non-communicable diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and many cancers. Further, obesity increases the rates of mortality for those with these diseases.

In addition, ASCO’s National Cancer Opinion Survey, a large, nationally representative survey conducted online by Harris Poll, found that less than a third of Americans (31%) realize that obesity is a risk factor for cancer. These findings were announced on October 24.

The article outlines recommendations developed by Summit stakeholders in four key areas.

1. **Provider Education and Training**: Increased coordination of education and training of healthcare providers across organizations and provider groups is needed in order to avoid duplication of efforts and take advantage of existing resources and areas of expertise. The group recommends:
   - Establishing a core set of competencies for all healthcare providers related to obesity.
   - Increasing obesity education and training for healthcare providers-in-training.
   - Ensuring guidelines are consistent and translatable to patient care across the medical spectrum.
   - Extending educational offerings to the whole care team.

2. **Public Education and Activation**: Efforts to educate the public and activate individuals to engage in lifestyle efforts to prevent and treat obesity can be strengthened if they are jointly developed. The group recommends:
   - Increasing our understanding of optimal messaging to targeted populations.
   - Engaging in joint messaging to the public.
   - Jointly developing better methods of connecting patients to available resources.
3. Research: Communication between different specialties working to prevent and treat obesity has been minimal, limiting the development of cross-disciplinary trials and the joint development of databases to explore a variety of obesity-related endpoints. The group recommends:

- Evaluating existing studies and data resources across organizations to answer additional research questions.
- Promoting the development of ancillary sub-studies by multidisciplinary research teams.
- Identifying alternative funding structures to help assist with secondary research.
- Encouraging junior-level investigators to work in this field through funding for post and pre-doctoral students as a part of large obesity prevention and treatment studies.

4. Policy and Advocacy: Coordination is needed to advance policy change by continuing existing efforts such as directly advocating at the state and federal levels and partnering with government agencies to ensure obesity prevention remains a priority in public health initiatives. The group recommends:

- Collaborating to support increased funding for obesity research at the national level.
- Advocating for adequate coverage and reimbursement for nutrition and physical activity services and access to physical activity support services.
- Considering the establishment of “centers of excellence” accreditation for practices that have the skills and personnel necessary to deliver optimal obesity care and could serve as a resource to smaller, community-based practices.
- Supporting the efforts of existing obesity coalitions.
- Leveraging the collective voices of professional organizations to advocate for large systemic changes to the known environmental contributors to obesity.

ASCO convened the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, the American Cancer Society, the American College of Cardiology, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American College of Physicians, the American College of Sports Medicine, the American College of Surgeons, the American Gastroenterological Association, the American Heart Association, the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, the American Society of Preventive Oncology, the Endocrine Society, the National Lipid Association, the Obesity Medicine Association, and the Obesity Society at the Summit.

In 2013, ASCO began efforts to raise awareness about the relationship between obesity and cancer.
by creating educational tools, fostering research in this area, and advocating for evidence-based weight management resources for survivors. With a goal of improving public health, the Society is committed to informing oncology providers, patients with cancer, and the general public of the existing data linking obesity, inactivity, and poor diet to worse outcomes in patients with cancer.

ASCO has developed a variety of materials for both patients and providers that share research and help to foster conversations on weight management. Additionally, in 2014, ASCO published a policy statement on obesity.

This Summit is an example of the ways the Society continues to collaborate with groups in the oncology field and beyond to learn from their work and develop joint research efforts. Working together with stakeholders, ASCO will continue to advocate for the changes needed to combat the rise of obesity and the associated health disparities seen in the United States and around the world.

Read the full article.

About ASCO:

Established in 1964, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Inc. (ASCO®) is committed to making a world of difference in cancer care. As the world’s leading organization of its kind, ASCO represents more than 40,000 oncology professionals who care for people living with cancer. Through research, education, and promotion of the highest-quality patient care, ASCO works to conquer cancer and create a world where cancer is prevented or cured, and every survivor is healthy. ASCO is supported by its affiliate organization, the Conquer Cancer Foundation. Learn more at www.ASCO.org, explore patient education resources at www.Cancer.Net, and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.