

ASCO Principles for Patient-Centered Healthcare Reform

As the leading medical professional oncology society committed to conquering cancer through research, education, prevention, and the delivery of high-quality patient care, the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is dedicated to working with policymakers and the entire cancer community to provide equal access to quality health care with special emphasis on reducing insurance and economic barriers to cancer care.

Recognizing that the primary goal of healthcare reform is to improve access to care for all Americans, ASCO is committed to helping to ensure that all people affected by cancer receive high-quality care. Although many non-economic factors influence access to cancer care, lack of adequate health insurance poses a major barrier to receiving appropriate treatment. Cancer patients without adequate insurance receive less care, receive it later, and have worse outcomes than those with better insurance coverage. Uninsured and under-insured families facing a diagnosis of cancer report that they are unable to meet their out-of-pocket financial responsibilities and often must forgo cancer care in order to pay other bills. The uninsured and under-insured also suffer significant stress as a result of their situation. The ultimate result is that such patients unnecessarily experience worse outcomes themselves. Further, this circumstance also increases overall expenses for all Americans.

As policymakers consider options for additional reform of the healthcare system, ASCO recommends the following principles as a policy framework that protects the interests of individuals affected by cancer.

- All Americans should have access to affordable and sufficient healthcare coverage regardless of their income or health status. To ensure protected access, the current ban on pre-existing condition limitations, elimination of annual and lifetime coverage caps, and maintenance of guaranteed renewability should be preserved.
- Any efforts to reform the healthcare system at the national, state, or local levels should ensure that individuals with healthcare insurance can continue to access affordable insurance without interruption.
- All individuals with cancer should have health insurance that guarantees access to high-quality cancer care that is delivered by a cancer specialist and that provides the full range of services needed by patients with cancer a timely manner.
- Policymakers should, in any policy changes, promote and protect cancer prevention and screening services, as they are key to reducing cancer mortality. Policy makers should preserve the "no copay" access to screening services that currently exists.
- All patients should have meaningful access to clinical trials, and health insurance coverage should not be a barrier to clinical trials participation.

- Current efforts to improve quality, affordability, and access to care for patients and communities through value-based reform strategies should be continued. Current efforts to improve value in healthcare should continue to be prioritized, and value-based reforms should be designed and implemented in a patient-centered way.
- Healthcare reform efforts should engage patients and providers to obtain meaningful input in order to avoid unintended consequences during implementation.

ASCO remains dedicated to supporting the efforts of policymakers to strengthen the nation's healthcare delivery system on behalf of all patients with cancer and their providers. For more information, please contact policy@asco.org.