



Study by The US Oncology Network identifies potential areas for cancer care quality and cost improvements

Study finding areas to improve cost and quality published in the Journal of Oncology Practice

The Woodlands, Texas (Sept. 23, 2011) — With cancer care costs rising at an unprecedented rate, [The US Oncology Network](#), one of the nation’s largest networks of community-based oncologists dedicated to advancing cancer care in America, reported a study that identified areas where both the cost and quality of care could be improved. The new study titled, “[Benchmarks for value in cancer care: an analysis of a large commercial population](#),” found that the key areas driving the spike in costs are chemotherapy, hospital admissions, emergency room visits and aggressive end of life care. In fact, cancer patients in a commercially insured population receiving chemotherapy averaged \$111,000 per year in total medical and pharmacy costs – about four times the cost of cancer patients not receiving chemotherapy and nearly 26 times the cost of non-oncology patients. Plus, more than half of the cancer patients in the study received chemotherapy within the last 30 days of life.

This study was chosen to be published in the “State of Oncology” supplement of the peer-reviewed [Journal of Oncology Practice](#) because it was found to cover an increasingly important issue for oncologists.

“I’m pleased that the *Journal of Oncology Practice* decided to feature this study because the unsustainable ballooning costs of cancer care is an issue that needs to be addressed sooner rather than later,” said [Michael Kolodziej](#), M.D., lead author, oncologist with [New York Oncology Hematology](#), and chairman of The US Oncology Network Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee. “This study shows that the cancer care community needs to focus on delivering high-quality, evidence-based medicine with a focus on disease management that emphasizes the importance of advance care planning and end of life support. I believe oncologists should look into working with payers to better manage costs and improve the quality of care each patient receives by following evidence-based treatment guidelines.”

The US Oncology Network partnered with [Milliman, Inc.](#) to evaluate the prevalence and costs associated with cancer treatment in a commercially insured population. This was done by utilizing Medstat 2007, a large commercial insurance database that contains private sector health data and claims information for about 14 million insured lives from approximately 100 payers. Fourteen cancer diagnoses were included and evaluated in ten cancer groups including Lung, Breast, Colon, Rectal, Pancreatic, Ovarian, Multiple Myeloma, Lymphoma, Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia and Prostate. Study endpoints included analyzing the cost of treatment over one year and costs incurred at the end of life.

“The study also showed that in a commercial population, cancer is not a common diagnosis – less than one percent,” said Dr. Kolodziej. “However, money spent on cancer patients made up ten

percent of spending by the payer. This high cost of cancer care is exacerbated by expensive drugs and care with little value.”

Studies in the past conducted in part by The US Oncology Network have shown that following Level I Pathways, its physician-developed evidence-based treatment guidelines, can reduce costs without impacting survival. Level I Pathways evaluate efficacy, toxicity and cost when recommending therapies so patients can receive the most effective treatment with the least side effects and lowest costs.

About The US Oncology Network

The US Oncology Network is one of the nation’s largest networks of community-based oncology physicians dedicated to advancing cancer care in America. Like-minded physicians are united through The Network around a common vision of expanding patient access to high-quality, integrated cancer care in communities throughout the nation. Leveraging healthcare information technology, shared best practices, refined evidence-based medicine guidelines, and quality measurements, physicians affiliated with The US Oncology Network are committed to advancing the quality, safety, and science of cancer care to improve patient outcomes. The US Oncology Network is supported by [McKesson Specialty Health](#), a division of [McKesson Corporation](#) focused on empowering a vibrant and sustainable community patient care delivery system to advance the science, technology and quality of care. For more information, visit www.usoncology.com.

Media Contact:

Claire Crye, McKesson Specialty Health

(281) 863-6783

Claire.Crye@McKesson.com

###