

A position statement of the Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association

HOPA understands the significance of access to quality health care that sufficiently meets the needs of cancer patients and their families. Hematology/Oncology pharmacists are integral to cancer care and involved with the care of cancer patients at all phases of their treatment. As such, HOPA strongly feels that each cancer patient should have access to a hematology/oncology pharmacist as a vital component of the cancer care team. The role of HOPA's members spans across the health care continuum from direct patient care, to education, and research. HOPA members work in hospitals, clinics, physician offices, community pharmacies, home health practices, and other healthcare settings.

As discussions related to health care reform continue to evolve and advance, HOPA would like to put forth a set of principles that should be retained in any health care reform proposal in order to ensure that patients are granted adequate, and accessible health insurance. Health plans should also be affordable in order for those with serious health care needs to be able to access them. HOPA offers these general principles as provisions that should be included in health reform measures:

- **Protect against pre-existing condition exclusions.** People with cancer are at much greater risk of being denied coverage due to having a pre-existing condition. Protecting people with pre-existing conditions means not simply an offer of insurance but an offer of insurance that is affordable and adequate.
- **Guarantee access to adequate care.** Cancer patients typically need access to complex care and services. This includes affordable medications and therapies, coverage for multidisciplinary providers, and support services. Eliminating essential health benefit requirements may mean that cancer patients cannot obtain coverage that would be adequate for their health care needs.
- **Ensure affordability of coverage for older Americans.** Cancer incidence increases with age, and those from age 50 to 64 are at special risk for cancer. Those Americans would also be put at risk by proposals permitting wider age bands than currently permitted and higher premiums for older Americans.
- **Preserve access to preventive services.** With access to screenings, the number of new cancer cases can be reduced and many cancer deaths can be prevented. Research shows that screening for cancers as recommended helps prevent these diseases by finding precancerous lesions so they can be treated before they become cancerous. Screening for cervical, colorectal, and breast cancers also helps find these diseases at an early stage, when treatment works best.
- **Obtain patient and provider input.** Healthcare reform efforts should engage stakeholders including patients and providers. Stakeholder input is essential to upholding quality standards of care and avoiding unintended consequences.

HOPA will continue to be a resource on health care reform proposals as it impacts people with cancer. We will continue to monitor activity relating to repeal and replace measures and thoughtfully assess any legislation and coalitions that bear directly upon HOPA's mission and Public Policy agenda.