CoC Accreditation: Benefits for Patients and Families

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Patient-centered care has emerged as an imperative for the healthcare industry. It drives patient satisfaction, quality of care, patient safety, better outcomes, and reduced costs. With these goals in mind, the Commission on Cancer's (CoC) *Cancer Program Standards: Ensuring Patient-Centered Care* (2016 Edition) covers the requirements cancer programs must meet to earn and maintain CoC accreditation, along with standards to promote patient-centered cancer care. These include delivery of genetic testing and counseling, development of survivorship care plans, and ways to address psychosocial distress and healthcare disparities and barriers.

This article explores the value of CoC accreditation and the role of HIM in raising awareness, providing multidisciplinary education, and advancing benefits for cancer patients and their families.

What do you know about CoC accreditation and its benefits?

Establishing and maintaining CoC accreditation is a voluntary commitment aimed at making sure a cancer program offers a full range of services required to diagnose, treat, rehabilitate, and support patients and their families. Continual evaluation of program performance promotes patient engagement and high-quality cancer care.

CoC accreditation offers significant benefits for cancer programs, patients, families, and communities. It's a streamlined process with quality measures in place, standards that must be followed, and performance improvement initiatives. The CoC revolves around a multidisciplinary group of professionals who are responsible for program management and adherence to standards. Accredited programs receive the following benefits from the CoC:

- **National recognition**—by organizations such as The Joint Commission, American Cancer Society, and National Cancer Institute, for having established performance measures for ensuring high-quality care.
- **Organizational model**—to support delivery of comprehensive, multidisciplinary cancer care.
- **Quality improvement measures**—access to resource tools that compare quality of care and improve performance based on nationally recognized quality measures and standards.
- **Data analysis**—participation in CoC special studies developed to address important issues in cancer care.
- **Public awareness**—promotion and national exposure (marketing efforts, the CoC Hospital Locator, etc.) offering patient information about where to receive quality care.

For patients, their families and communities, the CoC quality standards for cancer programs ensure patient-centered services:

- Quality care, close to home
- Comprehensive care, including a complete range of state-of-the-art services and equipment
- A multidisciplinary team approach to coordinate the best available treatment options
- Information about ongoing cancer clinical trials and new treatment options
- Access to prevention and early detection programs, cancer education, and support services
- Ongoing monitoring and improvements in cancer care
- Patient tracking through the cancer data system

- A cancer registry that offers lifelong patient follow-up

A cancer diagnosis means many options to consider and decisions to be made, which can be overwhelming for patients and families. As a first step, the CoC Hospital Locator is a helpful tool that allows an easy search for resources and services offered by accredited programs in every state.

What is a cancer registry and why is it important?

According to the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA), a cancer registry is an information system designed for the collection, management, and analysis of data on persons with a cancer diagnosis. Healthcare institution registries must maintain data on all patients diagnosed and/or treated for cancer at their facility.

Patient Follow-up and Why It's ImportantMaintaining a cancer registry ensures availability of accurate, timely, and complete data for treatment, research, and educational purposes. The registry includes a broad range of demographic and medical information such as medical history, diagnostic findings, cancer specifications, therapy, and follow-up.

State law requires that all healthcare entities—including hospitals, cancer centers, physician practices—report malignancy according to specific criteria. The standards for CoC-accredited programs mandate that data be collected and analyzed by a Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR). These individuals are data information specialists who capture a complete history, diagnosis, treatment, and health status of every cancer patient in the US.

What is required to become a CTR?

Gone are the days when cancer registrars were simply trained on the job. Today, community colleges offer formal education programs that teach cancer data management. In addition, NCRA offers an online certificate program in cancer registry management through AHIMA. Areas of study include cancer program management, medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, biostatistics and epidemiology, cancer data abstracting, and more.

To become a CTR, a candidate must meet eligibility requirements including a combination of education and experience in the cancer registry field, and then pass an examination administered by the NCRA Council on Certification. The growing need for CTRs opens new opportunities for HIM professionals who wish to broaden their skills and seek more diverse, rewarding career options.

Advancing CoC education and cancer awareness

CoC accreditation denotes quality, potentially attracting more patients and providing opportunities for patient engagement. HIM professionals have the experience, expertise and leadership ability to raise awareness about cancer care and CoC accreditation in their own facilities. Multi-discipline education is essential. If your facility is CoC accredited, work with your marketing and public relations department to include information on your website and in related patient materials. Providing access to information eases the burden for patients and families faced with difficult decisions.

As healthcare organizations make the shift to value-based care, establishing CoC accreditation seems a natural fit for enhanced efforts to engage patients, build service lines, and become more competitive in today’s market.

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