Assessment of Nutrition Services Available in New Mexico Outpatient Cancer Facilities

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Programmatic Aims and Objective

Evaluating Nutrition Services in Outpatient Cancer Centers in New Mexico (ENSOCC) Program:

• Aims to improve access to nutrition care for ambulatory oncology patients across New Mexico (NM) by comprehensively identifying present deficits in nutrition access.

• Sub-analysis aims to characterize, from a patient’s perspective, the availability of nutrition services offered by outpatient cancer facilities (OCF) throughout NM according to their respective websites.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis of Outpatient New Mexico Cancer Facilities (OCF) by Region, n = 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Health Region</th>
<th>Number of OCF by Region</th>
<th>Number of OCF with Nutrition Services</th>
<th>Nutrition Services Offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>1 (5.3%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>Outpatient medical nutrition therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>4 (21.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>4 (21.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>3 (15.8%)</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td>Dietary counseling, Nutritional services (Dietitian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>7 (36.8%)</td>
<td>3 (42.9%)</td>
<td>Nutrition counseling services, Oncology nutritionist, Nutrition and Food Services (NFS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methods

• Conducted a descriptive analysis utilizing data collected by searching specific terms on publicly available OCF websites to understand what nutrition services are discoverable by a typical patient.

• Utilized a list of 20 facilities where tumors were diagnosed in NM ranked by patient volume, and the 2021 NM Cancer Council Directory.

• Filtered the lists of facilities based on whether or not they treat patients in an outpatient setting and eliminated any duplicates, resulting in my sample size of 19.

• Maintained search terms, dates, findings and verification in an Excel database.

• 13 of 19 OCF websites (68.4%) do not offer/advertise nutrition services.

• If oncology patients do not reside close to an OCF offering nutrition services, total distance travelled to obtain adequate nutritional care could be substantial.

Conclusion and Future Steps

Given the importance of nutrition in oncology, my next steps could be interviewing cancer patients on their experiences accessing nutrition care during and after their treatment to determine what additional barriers exist for patients trying to receive adequate nutrition care in NM.

Discussion

• These findings support the growing body of scientific literature that there is a gap in oncology nutrition, specifically, that the availability of malnutrition screening, diet intervention and counseling services for oncology patients are significantly limited across NM.

• Finding information regarding nutrition services on the six OCF websites with nutritional services was straightforward. The remaining 13 OCF websites were vague or difficult to navigate. I understand that some OCFs might offer nutrition services that were not listed; however, their websites do not present this information.

• The lack of available information presented by OCF websites may inhibit the confidence of NM residents to navigate the websites and acquire adequate attention for their nutritional health.

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References


