Identifying Patients in Financial Need: Cancer Care Providers’ Perceptions of Barriers

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Some eligible patients with financial hardship may not be referred to assistance programs because cancer care providers do not know the full extent of patients’ needs. This article describes barriers cancer care providers face in identifying patients who have financial concerns by using qualitative data from 21 interviews with providers from one Canadian province. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed with a thematic approach. Four major themes emerged: no standardized approach existed for assessing needs, family members rather than patients may have better awareness of financial concerns, patients may not be forthcoming about financial concerns, and financial concerns may change over time. Adopting a standardized assessment protocol that routinely screens patients at multiple times during their care, educating patients about out-of-pocket costs, and educating providers to identify and assess financial need may enable more patients to access available financial resources. Although the Canadian and U.S. healthcare systems are different, concerns about out-of-pocket costs may be similar.

At a Glance

- Implementing a standard process and assessment tool that is given to patients at multiple points during their care may address many barriers that cancer care providers face in identifying patients with financial concerns.
- Ongoing professional education will help cancer care providers develop skills to detect patients’ financial concerns.
- Patients and family members should be educated about the potential financial impact of a cancer diagnosis.