Focus on Communities

The opportunity for oncology nursing to have a broader influence in clinical care has never been more in sync with the times, buoyed by breakthroughs in diagnostics, precision treatments, and broader applications of interprofessional care. However, that influence is still encumbered by inequities in cancer care delivery to marginalized or underserved patients here in the United States and globally. As an example, a study using a 1997–2014 database of more than one million patients reported significant survival disparities for uninsured and publicly insured patients with prostate, lung, and colorectal cancer (Ellis et al., 2017).

Concurrently, the exchange of ideas about cancer care delivery is no longer hobbled by antiquated efforts to communicate. The Internet—and its willing accomplice social media—continues to break down communication barriers, enhance connectivity, and allow mutual goals and collective solutions (Barr, Vania, Randall, & Mulvale, 2017; Mimms, 2016). With assistance from the Internet, awareness about the care of patients with disadvantages relies less on where patients are from or where they are treated. With the Internet supporting discussion of ideas and methods, the reach of oncology nurses—targeting the common denominator of information and communication technology on the opportunity for oncology nurses can have.

To focus on disparities in cancer care delivery integral to oncology nursing practice, the Oncology Nursing Society (2017) published a position statement on access to quality care. And, relatedly, within this issue of the Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing (CJON) is a new column, Communities. This eighth regularly occurring CJON column will target oncology nursing expertise and practice that reaches patients receiving care out of the mainstream and dealing with access-to-care issues. The Communities column will increase the visibility of oncology nursing in practice as a force of change.

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