Achieving Quality Oncology Practice Initiative Certification Through Quality Improvement

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The public and healthcare payers are increasingly looking to specialty designations and certifications to determine the quality of cancer centers. The Quality Oncology Practice Initiative (QOPI®) Certification Program is one way for cancer centers to demonstrate commitment to high-quality patient care. Achieving QOPI certification for the author’s cancer center was driven by a nurse-led quality improvement initiative. The result was an official designation that reflects the mission, vision, and philosophy of the organization.

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The author’s comprehensive cancer center has an interdisciplinary quality subcommittee that reports directly to the organization’s cancer committee. The quality subcommittee tracks the cancer center’s performance via a dashboard to follow quality metrics for medical-surgical teams, spearheads the facility’s participation in QOPI, and directs quality improvement from writing policy and standards to following certification opportunities related to oncology services. The committee is chaired by a surgical oncologist on faculty and includes medical and radiation oncologists, an oncology clinical nurse specialist, a clinical nurse educator, administrative nurses, a healthcare quality analyst, and administrators.

Because of the role of nurses as direct care providers, expert consultants, educators, managers, and administrators, the initiative to achieve QOPI certification was largely driven by nurses in all aspects of quality improvement from writing policy to programming electronic documentation. Frontline nurse managers emerged as the linchpins for the team, and the success of the initiative was largely attributed to their ability to link strategic planning with operational action. Active involvement of direct patient care nurses is essential to successful practice change, and the role of the frontline nurse manager should not be underestimated (Wilson, 2011). Managers need to endorse and lead quality improvement initiatives. The author’s experience demonstrates that nurse-driven initiatives are possible in any healthcare system that is committed to patient centered care with a focus on reliability and safety.

The QOPI Certification Program uses 17 selected standards that are detailed in the July 2012 edition of ASCO’s Journal of Oncology Practice. The 17 selected standards are 65 detailed elements to be addressed. Beginning in 2013, new standards for oral chemotherapy and patient education will be added to the certification criteria (ASCO, 2012).

Nurse-Driven Interdisciplinary Initiative

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