



# Oncology Therapy Access Working Group

## 2020 MEETING SUMMARY

The Alliance for Patient Access hosted its annual Oncology Therapy Access Working Group meeting virtually, welcoming oncologists, health care experts, advocates and representatives from leading patient advocacy organizations to discuss policies that impact health care for people with cancer. Discussion focused on a range of issues.

### HEALTH PLAN DESIGN & PATIENT ACCESS

Working group members agreed there needs to be more transparency with prior authorization processes. One suggestion was standardizing the process so that providers would have one universal form for approvals. Members also explored the concept of automatic approvals; if insurers don't get back to providers in a timely matter, the request automatically gets approved.

Working group members also discussed how health plans can influence which diagnostic tests are available to patients, making it difficult to provide patient-centered care. Members agreed that treatment and access decisions should be rooted in sound, medical evidence, not payers' financial interests.

### CANCER CARE DURING COVID-19

Oncologists and their patients have been greatly impacted this year by COVID-19. Working group members noted the impact on diagnoses and discussed an increase in mortality because, as one working group member observed, "Cancer doesn't slow down for anything, even a global pandemic." Patients' delaying care in order to avoid potential COVID-19 exposure has allowed cancer to progress in many situations.

### OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS

Cancer patients need more innovative treatment options, but they also need policymakers' help in making existing treatment more affordable. Working group members discussed out-of-pocket caps and out-of-pocket smoothing for Medicare Part D. The group also explored the challenge of co-pay accumulator adjustment programs. By not applying co-pay cards' value toward patients' annual deductible, the programs result in huge out-of-pocket bills that leave patients struggling to afford their treatments.

### FUTURE ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

Several working group members said collaboration will be key as the U.S. health care system recovers from COVID-19. One member said taking simple steps like asking fellow clinicians, "Are you seeing this issue as well?" can go a long way. There is strength in numbers, panelists agreed, and the best way to engage on behalf of patients is by being vocal and proactive.

Working group members emphasized that educational materials are important for raising public awareness. Furthermore, members said engaging with policymakers at the federal level and state level will help encourage health plan reform and, ultimately, patient access.

