

Successful Methods for Engaging Physicians and other Direct Health Care Service Providers in Appalachian Community Cancer Control Activities

Background

Engaging busy physicians and other direct health care service providers in statewide and local cancer control initiatives is difficult. Time factors tied to busy clinical responsibilities are found to be a barrier to active participation. Multiple roles have been identified through which clinicians can contribute legitimizing and credible support to cancer control efforts. Clinicians have become statewide and sub-state coalition leaders. They have successfully organized and participated in statewide cancer-specific programs (e.g., colorectal cancer screening) and led topical campaigns (e.g., disparities reduction, advocacy for state laws and resources). Examples of physicians and other direct health care service providers playing multiple roles in local cancer control activities can be identified. However, more information and stories of experiences are needed to learn how to effectively identify interested but busy physicians and other direct cancer care providers, and how to effectively match them with statewide programs, cancer coalitions and local cancer plan implementation activities to become cancer control champions.

A number of professional and accrediting organizations encourage member involvement in comprehensive cancer control efforts. The American College of Surgeons (ACoS) Commission on Cancer supports a liaison program with the American Cancer Society (ACS) that explicitly encourages physicians' involvement to promote collaboration. Physician liaisons with each ACoS cancer center are encouraged to promote cooperative community outreach initiatives. The American College of Radiology encourages its members to participate in the ACoS initiatives as cancer physician liaisons and to assist with screening and diagnostic modalities at the community level. The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) are other professional medical societies whose members are encouraged to perform relevant assistance in community cancer control activities. Oncology Nursing Society Foundation (ONSF) supports member nurses and offers a variety of awards, scholarships and grants to nurses interested in community-based cancer care.

The issue of involvement of physicians and other direct health care service providers in cancer control in Appalachia is complicated by a limited number of those providers throughout the region. Three quarters of all Appalachian counties remain designated as Health Professions Shortage Areas. Only 22% of the certified cancer centers in the thirteen Appalachian states are located within the region, posing difficulties in availability of cancer care professionals to be tapped for coalition and local implementation activities. Identifying success stories of how to engage busy direct health care service providers across different Appalachian states would be instructive for all coalitions.

Questions

1. What best practices are used by CCC coalitions to engage physicians and other direct cancer care providers in state coalition organizations and in local cancer control implementation activities? How is active participation of direct health care service providers seen to assist state coalitions to enhance cancer control activities in local communities?
2. What personal and professional motivations are cited by physicians and other direct health care service providers for involvement in CCC activities? What facilitators and barriers are identified that influence engagement? What are the most common roles and activities played with CCC coalitions?
3. What professional and organizational incentives successfully encourage involvement?
4. In recruiting additional physicians and other direct cancer care providers, what approaches and messages are recommended to encourage engagement in CCC activities? What approaches and mechanisms are used in recruitment?

Action Point

Identify best practices in recruitment of physicians and other direct cancer care providers from at least five different state Comprehensive Cancer Control (CCC) coalitions active in their Appalachian regions. Identify and interview at least one physician or other direct health care service provider acknowledged as a cancer control champion from the Appalachian region from each of the five different states.