



# NNECOS News

*an email publication of Northern New England Clinical Oncology Society*

*June 2005  
Volume 1 Issue 2*

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

### **NNECOS ANNUAL MEETING**

***Portsmouth, NH ~ November 4-5, 2005***

You won't want to miss NNECOS' 2005 Annual Meeting at the elegant Sheraton Harborside in beautiful Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This two-day event provides an excellent opportunity to meet with your colleagues from our region while enhancing professional education. This outstanding event (with CME's and CEU's being offered) presents a balance of clinical and business presentations for attendees. The 2005 annual meeting also offers an ***all-new reimbursement update session*** Friday afternoon prior to the official start of the annual meeting.

The traditional meeting kicks-off with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres at 5:15 pm, followed by dinner, an ASCO policy update, a brief business meeting, and networking. Saturday offers presentations from excellent speakers on end of life issues, practice management, myeloma, chemotherapy safety, Medicare update, breast cancer management, and CINV/supportive care. Watch your mail for registration materials later this summer.

### **Join Us!**

Sheraton Harborside Portsmouth  
250 Market Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801  
Phone 603.431.2300  
[www.sheratonportsmouth.com](http://www.sheratonportsmouth.com)

## **ONCOLOGY REIMBURSEMENT 2005**

***Second Annual Spring Reimbursement Meeting May 24<sup>th</sup> in Concord, NH***

With over 75 attendees from the oncology community, this program for billers, nurses, practice managers, and physicians addressed key reimbursement issues in medical and radiation oncology in both office-based and hospital-based practices. The morning program included a keynote session highlighting the charge capture process in both the office and outpatient hospital-based settings using familiar clinical scenarios, followed by a Medicare update and question and answer session. Afternoon interactive workshops provided practical, nuts and bolts information and tools on billing and coding as it relates to hospital based medical oncology, office based medical oncology and radiation oncology (*new this year*).

***Be sure to join us for our reimbursement update session at the Annual Meeting on Friday, November 4<sup>th</sup> in Portsmouth, NH.***

## ***MEDICARE CONTRACTOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING, June 13, 2005***

### **NNECOS and MSCO Present on the Impact of MMA on Cancer Care**

On June 13, 2005 representatives of NNECOS and MSCO (Massachusetts Society of Clinical Oncology) were invited to present the community perspective on the MMA to the New England Contractor Advisory Committee. Dr. Denis Hammond from NNECOS led off the presentation with a review of how outpatient chemotherapy services were reimbursed before MMA. Specific emphasis was placed on how the AWP system cross subsidized the under funded administration services with the margin created between chemotherapy AWP and purchase price. Dr. Hammond stated that the current state of outpatient chemotherapy reimbursement has produced tremendous uncertainty in the medical oncology community. Next Dr. Charles Rosenbaum, Past President of MSCO, presented data on “underwater drugs”, the fluctuations in ASP, and the impact this has had on the ability of certain practitioners to continue to serve all of their Medicare patients in their offices. He also emphasized the fact that the demonstration project has lessened the negative impact MMA would have had on cancer clinical practice. He echoed Dr. Hammond’s assertion that there remains a great deal of uncertainty as to whether MMA will create an access problem for Medicare recipients who will require chemotherapy. Lastly Dr. Deborah Kamin, Director of Cancer Policy and Clinical Affairs for ASCO, discussed ASCO’s legislative and regulatory goals in regards to MMA for the upcoming year. ASCO is working to extend the Demonstration Project with an emphasis on making it part of a quality improvement initiative. ASCO is also working on correcting the problem of “underwater drugs”. Additionally they are working to make sure that the Competitive Acquisition Program, CAP, functions properly. Lastly, ASCO continues to try to define the resources required to properly care for patients receiving chemotherapy in the outpatient setting, and to communicate to CMS the true cost of those resources. A lively exchange with Dr. Craig Haug, Contractor Medical Director for NHIC, followed these presentations.

This presentation grew out of discussions that occurred at the NNECOS annual meeting last October in Killington, VT. Dr. Haug asked if representatives of NNECOS and ASCO would review the impact of MMA on clinical oncology practice six months into the program. We readily accepted this generous offer to communicate our experiences to the larger medical community that attends the CAC meetings. We also saw this as an opportunity to continue our communication with representatives of CMS that attend the CAC meetings as well. We are very gratified that Dr. Haug attended the Billing and Reimbursement Meeting that NNECOS sponsored this spring, and look forward to his attending our fall Annual Meeting November 4 and 5, 2005 in Portsmouth, NH.

## ***MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES!***

NNECOS membership renewal forms have been mailed. As you know, NNECOS is a tri-state regional affiliate of ASCO which provides visibility, voice, and influence on a national scale for our members. This helps each and every oncology practice in our region and is an important part of our mission for patient care. We all know that our states provide unique opportunity and unique challenges. We are proud to continue to provide quality cancer care in our rural environs that rivals the care given in larger urban centers. Maintaining our levels of achievement and independence are worthwhile goals. However since we are a small region, the participation of each individual is important to our mutual success. We all have a need to participate in the political, economic, and scientific debates that challenge the cancer care communities nationwide. An organization like NNECOS is one of the few places we can organize to express ourselves appropriately.

**Please keep an eye on your mail and take a moment to renew your NNECOS membership.**

## ***WEBSITE UPDATES – Check us out at [www.nnecos.org](http://www.nnecos.org)!***

Whether you're looking for information about an upcoming NNECOS event or a summary of a recent CPC or CAC meeting in which NNECOS leadership participated, check out [www.nnecos.org](http://www.nnecos.org) for important information affecting New England's oncology community.

## ***ASCO NEWS***

### **PRACTICAL TIPS**

ASCO has published a 2005 Supplement to Practical Tips for the Practicing Oncologist, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Practical Tips includes answers to the most commonly asked questions about coding, coverage, reimbursement and regulatory issues and is an excellent resource for physicians and their office staff. The 2005 Supplement provides details of the Medicare reimbursement system for 2005 including the drug administration services and the demonstration project.

You can order your copy of Practical Tips for the Practicing Oncologist, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition on the ASCO website at [http://www.asco.org/ac/1,1003,12-002147-00\\_18-0036354,00.asp](http://www.asco.org/ac/1,1003,12-002147-00_18-0036354,00.asp). ASCO members can also access the complete text at this link. The 2005 Supplement is available to both members and non-members at [http://www.asco.org/asco/downloads/2005\\_PT\\_Supplement\\_Uned.pdf](http://www.asco.org/asco/downloads/2005_PT_Supplement_Uned.pdf).

### **REIMBURSEMENT UPDATES**

In May, 2005, ASCO held two audioconferences to update members on changes in the new CMS coding regulations. The complete slide set from these audioconferences is available at [http://www.asco.org/asco/downloads/Audioconference\\_May\\_2005.ppt](http://www.asco.org/asco/downloads/Audioconference_May_2005.ppt). Other tools on the ASCO website include a list of frequently asked questions developed by CMS and posted to their website on April 14, 2005 ([http://www.asco.org/asco/downloads/CMS\\_FAQs.pdf](http://www.asco.org/asco/downloads/CMS_FAQs.pdf)) and a list of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter ASP drug prices with a comparison to 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter prices, available at [http://www.asco.org/asco/downloads/Drug\\_Payment\\_Comparisons\\_for\\_Q3\\_2005.pdf](http://www.asco.org/asco/downloads/Drug_Payment_Comparisons_for_Q3_2005.pdf).

## ***NHIC NEWS***

We were delighted to have Brenda Bedard, Training Specialist with NHIC Medicare B, as a presenter at the NNECOS Reimbursement Seminar on May 24. Dr. Craig Haug, Contractor Medical Director, was also in attendance and available for questions from our members. Thank you to both of them for their interest in oncology issues.

NHIC held an Ask the Contractor Teleconference (ACT) on April 8, 2005 on the Drug Administration Code Changes & Chemotherapy Demonstration Project. They have posted a question and answer summary of this call on the website. This can be accessed at [http://www.medicarenhic.com/ne\\_prov/seminars\\_act.shtml#1](http://www.medicarenhic.com/ne_prov/seminars_act.shtml#1).

The NHIC website is an invaluable tool for your practice. Be sure to check the website weekly at [www.medicarenhic.com](http://www.medicarenhic.com) and to subscribe to their list serve mailing list at <http://www.imail.imrsvcs.com/nhic/join.html>.

## ***CENTER FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES (CMS)***

The CMS website ([www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov)) is another valuable tool for your practice with pages dedicated to both physician office practice and hospital outpatient practice. Here are several important links.

### **SMOKING AND TOBACCO USE CESSATION**

CMS now provides coverage for smoking and tobacco use cessation counseling. They have published a Medlearn Matters article detailing this coverage and the billing requirements. Check it out at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2005/MM3834.pdf>. This may be a new billing opportunity for you.

### **MEDICARE REPLACEMENT DRUG DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

The Replacement Drug Demonstration Project has just been expanded to include coverage for breast cancer drugs for those beneficiaries who are classified as having recurrent disease. This project will expire on December 31, 2005 but there is still time to enroll patients. For more information, go to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/researchers/demos/drugcoveragedemo.asp>.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> QUARTER ASP PRICING**

ASP pricing for the third quarter (effective July 1) was recently posted on the CMS website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/providers/drugs/asp.asp>.

### **COVERAGE OF OFF-LABEL USE OF DRUGS FOR COLORECTAL CANCER**

Another important Medlearn Matters article was published on May 20, 2005 that addresses the coverage of off-label use of Oxaliplatin (Eloxatin™), Irinotecan (Camptosar®), Cetuximab (Erbix™), or Bevacizumab (Avastin™) in clinical trials identified by CMS and sponsored by the National Cancer Institute (NCI). For the complete text of this article go to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2005/MM3742.pdf>.

## ***YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US***

This is our second issue of NNECOS News. We plan to publish this e-newsletter quarterly (March, June, September and December) and we are interested in your feedback and suggestions. Please send your comments and suggestions for future issues to [nnecos@comcast.net](mailto:nnecos@comcast.net).

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**Feel free to forward this issue of NNECOS News to your colleagues who may not be current members of Northern New England Clinical Oncology Society.**

*If you would prefer not to receive future email correspondence from NNECOS, please reply to this message and type "unsubscribe" in the subject line.*

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## NEWS FROM OUR SPONSORS

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*"News from our Sponsors" will be included in NNECOS News on a space available basis, with preference being given to sponsors who have not shared news in the previous two issues. Send your submissions to [nnecos@comcast.net](mailto:nnecos@comcast.net).*

### PHARMION

We are pleased to welcome Pharmion Corporation as a sponsor for NNECOS. Pharmion markets two important products to the oncology community: 1) Vidaza (azacitidine for injectable suspension) for all subtypes of Myelodysplastic Syndrome; and 2) Innohep (tinzaparin sodium injection) a Low Molecular Weight Heparin for DVT with or without PE (administered with warfarin).

### NATIONAL ONCOLOGY ALLIANCE

#### *National Oncology Alliance and Cardinal Health Specialty Pharmaceutical Distribution Form Preferred Distribution Agreement*

The National Oncology Alliance (NOA), a member-based oncology service organization wholly owned by Broadlane, has entered into a strategic distribution agreement with Specialty Pharmaceutical Distribution, a division of Cardinal Health Inc.

This agreement gives NOA membership - comprising 3,500 physicians across 50 states - access to advanced distribution capabilities and exemplary customer service, as well as state-of-the-art online ordering and reporting capabilities. In addition, oncology practices can expect to benefit in lower cost for supplies due to the added buying power that Cardinal Health brings to NOA and Broadlane customers.

These benefits complement the value of NOA's existing clinical and business support offerings, which are designed to help members provide superior patient care while also growing healthy practices.

"Healthcare is changing, and in order to survive, oncologists must put increased focus on ways to improve practice efficiency without compromising patient care," said Kevin M. Rodondi, PharmD, NOA general manager. "This means looking at ways to 'buy smarter,' while also updating clinical and business processes that may no longer make sense. Our relationship with Cardinal, along with the range of added services NOA offers, demonstrates our commitment to help oncologists navigate these challenges – to not only survive, but thrive."

Cardinal Health has supported the oncology industry for decades through its Specialty Pharmaceutical Distribution division. As part of its commitment to the industry now and in the future, Cardinal Health, in conjunction with HealthTalk Interactive, offers professional and patient educational programs consisting of comprehensive information on the latest oncology treatments, therapies and reimbursement issues.

For additional information please contact David Matthews with Broadlane/NOA at 972-813-7678 or visit [www.noainc.com](http://www.noainc.com).