

The Role of Oncology Pharmacy Technicians to Address Health Disparities

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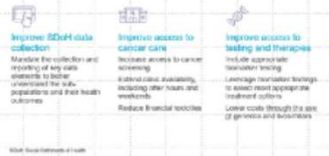
Abstract

Cancer Treatment Costs: A Barrier to Care
Cancer patients often face a range of financial challenges that hinder access to treatment. These challenges include missed work, credit payments delayed, reliance on community support, and even long journeys to receive care. These financial burdens create obstacles to innovative treatments, undermining the progress made in cancer care. As we move towards personalized cancer treatment, with a shift from traditional chemotherapy to oral oncology and other targeted therapies, the importance of addressing financial toxicities becomes evident. These financial burdens, encompassing out-of-pocket expenses, sacrifices, and time commitments, affect many patients, regardless of their insurance type. With rising number of targeted therapies being developed in oral formulation, a paradigm shift needs to happen to enable and empower Oncology Pharmacy Techs to play a very important role and proactive roles in addressing financial barriers to access appropriate life saving cancer therapies.

The evolving landscape of cancer treatment brings its own set of challenges, especially with the increasing use of oral oncology. However, it also presents opportunities to improve patient care and streamline resources. One such opportunity is medically integrated pharmaceutical dispensing, which not only benefits patients by saving them trips to the pharmacy but also creates an ancillary revenue stream for physicians. As we continue to advance in the field of cancer therapy, it is crucial to embrace solutions like these and foster the role of a collaborative pharmacy team in addressing the rising challenges. Pharmacy-led patient assistance programs play a key role in mitigating health disparities in cancer treatment by providing support to underserved populations. When addressing health disparities, the importance of addressing financial toxicities becomes evident as one of the largest challenges cancer patients can face is medication affordability. At CBCCA, we have made it our mission to ensure patients receive equal, quality care regardless of income, racial, or ethnic status. Through our pharmacy-led patient assistance programs we have begun to address these health disparities by offering personalized support and resources, medication management, and patient education. In the year 2024 from the months of January to June, we have connected 20 patients with foundations that cover the full cost of their medication. Another 90 patients have been connected to foundations providing financial assistance that greatly reduces the cost of their medication. Through comprehensive screening, we identify patients who qualify for and benefit from financial assistance and connect them with proper resources to aid in their treatment journey. This study aims to prove the effectiveness of pharmacy-led patient assistance and show how through these programs we can enhance equitable access to necessary therapies and improve treatment outcomes and reduce patient burdens. It is our belief that the implementation of these programs can help to reduce disparities and highlight successful models that can be replicated to further advance health equity in oncology care.

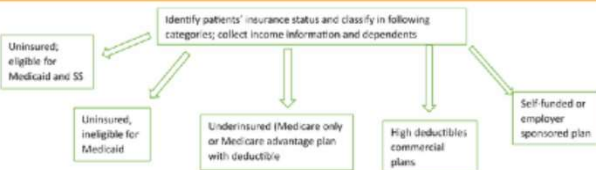
No One Left Alone (NOLA)

Solving cancer health disparities through new value-based care models



Implementation plan:

We implemented a robust and systematic process to ensure that every patient's treatment cost was addressed comprehensively. This process involved identifying suitable foundations, facilitating access to free drugs through voucher programs, and leveraging community resources to eliminate any concerns about the financial aspect of their treatment.



At the initial visit for each new patient NOLA intake form is completed by patient

At the initial visit for each new patient NOLA intake form is completed by patient

1. Have you ever received any type of cancer treatment? Yes No

2. How long have you been diagnosed with cancer? _____

3. What type of cancer do you have? _____

4. What type of treatment are you currently receiving? _____

5. How long have you been receiving treatment? _____

6. How much do you pay for your medication each month? _____

7. How long have you been taking this medication? _____

8. How much do you pay for your medication each month? _____

9. How long have you been taking this medication? _____

10. How much do you pay for your medication each month? _____

11. How long have you been taking this medication? _____

12. How much do you pay for your medication each month? _____

13. How long have you been taking this medication? _____

14. How much do you pay for your medication each month? _____

15. How long have you been taking this medication? _____

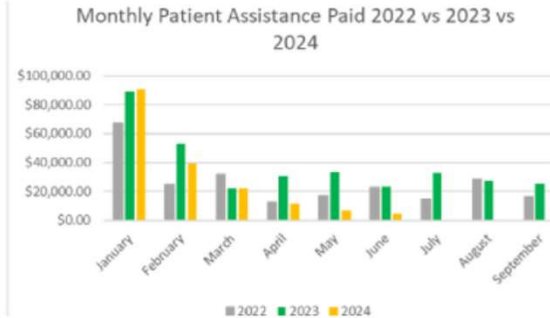
16. How much do you pay for your medication each month? _____

17. How long have you been taking this medication? _____

18. How much do you pay for your medication each month? _____

19. How long have you been taking this medication? _____

20. How much do you pay for your medication each month? _____

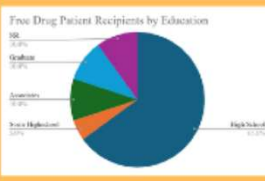
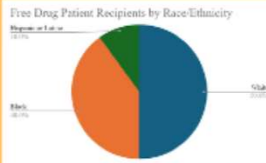


The amount of patient assistance provided at CBCCA, broken down by month. Data shows that assistance drops off after the first quarter due to patients meeting their deductibles. 2024 shows a decrease in assistance due to an increase in insurance coverage. We only have data for the year of 2024 up to June.

Free Drug Program (January 2024-June 2024) (for uninsured or otherwise eligible patients)

Prostate Code	Dose	Units Prescribed	Cost per Dose	Total Cost	Number of Patients
Drug A	1200 mg	2	\$8,507.40	\$17,014.80	1
Drug B	300 mg	3	\$6,174.71	\$18,524.13	1
Drug C	750 mg	7	\$816.67	\$5,716.69	5
Drug D	200 mg	30	\$11,025.56	\$330,766.80	6
Drug E	400 mg	4	\$22,461.16	\$89,804.64	1
Drug F	300 mg	9	\$9,473.98	\$85,265.81	1
Drug G	22.5 mg	4	\$464.72	\$1,858.88	2
Drug H	150 mg	1	\$204.99	\$204.99	1
Drug I	600 mg	1	\$23,883.14	\$23,883.14	1
Drug J	300 mg	3	\$21,341	\$2,742.00	1
Drug K	120 mg	6	\$8,399.82	\$50,398.92	1
Total		70	\$86,336.71	\$617,678.36	30

Free Drugs completely covered through patient assistance foundations from January 2024-June 2024. 11 drugs were completely covered, of these drugs, 70 doses were included in coverage for a total of \$617,678.36 saved for patients.



This graph shows data from January 2024- June 2024. Of the 20 patients who received free drugs through foundation support:

- 65% completed a high school education, 5% completed some high school, 10% completed an associate program, 10% completed a graduate program, and 10% did not report their education status.
- 60% make under \$50,000/year, 20% make \$50,000-\$74,999, and 5% make \$75,000-\$99,999. 15% did not report their income.
- 50% of recipients were white, 40% were black, and 10% were Hispanic or Latino.

Findings

Since January of 2022, we have tracked patient assistance funding for our clinic and shown an increase in the dollar amount foundations have provided in assistance for our patients. However, in 2024, we have been seeing an increase in insurance coverage for patients which is aiding in the financial burden of patients. This combination of insurance and foundation assistance has resulted in low or no copays, greatly reducing out-of-pocket patient costs. During the first quarter, we tend to see the largest amounts of patient assistance due to patients having not yet met their insurance deductible. This trend drops off in the following months and reaches a low point in the summer months. Over a 6-month span from January to June 2024, CBCCA has been able to connect 90 patients with assistance programs and foundations that provided \$188,155.73 in drug cost coverage. When comparing the combination of insurance coverage and assistance programs, \$6,196,691.18 of prescribed treatment drugs have been covered, resulting in a copy of only \$109,902.9 for patients at CBCCA from January 2024-June 2024. Another 20 patients at CBCCA have qualified for free drug programs which covered the entirety of their medication costs totaling \$617,678.36 saved in the first 6 months of 2024.

Pharmacist Led Financial Assistance Program: Drug costs vs insurance coverage and assistance coverage (January 2024-June 2024)

Drug	Number of Patients	Assess Paid for Foundation	Drug Cost	Total Drug Cost	Insurance	Total	Total	Total	Total
Drug 1	1	\$14.4	\$7,272.0	\$7,286.4	\$7,286.4	\$7,286.4	\$7,286.4	\$7,286.4	\$7,286.4
Drug 2	1	\$4.0	\$1,005.0	\$1,009.0	\$1,009.0	\$1,009.0	\$1,009.0	\$1,009.0	\$1,009.0
Drug 3	1	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22
Drug 4	13	\$612.06	\$612.06	\$612.06	\$612.06	\$612.06	\$612.06	\$612.06	\$612.06
Drug 5	1	\$22.96	\$22.96	\$22.96	\$22.96	\$22.96	\$22.96	\$22.96	\$22.96
Drug 6	1	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18
Drug 7	1	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12
Drug 8	1	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18	\$1,118.18
Drug 9	1	\$12.36	\$12.36	\$12.36	\$12.36	\$12.36	\$12.36	\$12.36	\$12.36
Drug 10	1	\$126.80	\$126.80	\$126.80	\$126.80	\$126.80	\$126.80	\$126.80	\$126.80
Drug 11	1	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0
Drug 12	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 13	1	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12
Drug 14	1	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0	\$4.0
Drug 15	1	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22	\$2,027.22
Drug 16	1	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12	\$73.12
Drug 17	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 18	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 19	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 20	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 21	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 22	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 23	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 24	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 25	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 26	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 27	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 28	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 29	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 30	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 31	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 32	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 33	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 34	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 35	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 36	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 37	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 38	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 39	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Drug 40	1	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0	\$7,272.0
Total	80	\$18,125.75	\$18,125.75	\$18,125.75	\$18,125.75	\$18,125.75	\$18,125.75	\$18,125.75	\$18,125.75

CBCCA has been able to connect 90 patients with assistance programs that aided in \$188,155.73 worth of their drug costs over the first 6 months of 2024.

Summary and Discussion

In summary, with proactive approach to identify financial barriers, search for eligibility and also patient assistance programs as well as following structural algorithms narrated above, we were able to help

- Over 100 patients with patient assistance to get appropriate medications
- Procure free drugs worth \$617,678.36 (for 20 patients) who had otherwise no resource whatsoever
- Generate assistance worth \$188,155.73 for 90 patients for their out-of-pocket liabilities
- In addition 65 patients received free drugs for intravenous administration

The total number of patients receiving cancer treatment was 439. Essentially nearly 50% of patients needed some type of help for the out-of-pocket support.

- Not a single patient was turned away for treatment irrespective of their ability to pay
- We incurred a cost of \$250,000 in direct cost for the FTE and other logistics. Indirect cost includes \$90,000 MD time (Dr. Patel), an additional 1000 hours of study time and research and 200 hours of other staff (including business office for calculation for the OOP cost for individual beneficiary depending on the regimen).