

ANCO FAX News

Association of Northern California Oncologists
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INTRODUCTION

The *ANCO FAX News* focuses on ANCO's core activities—advocacy, clinical and professional education, membership benefits, and *Association* news. While membership mailings, FAX broadcasts, and ListServ postings continue, the *ANCO FAX News* summarizes this information in a regular forum of important news to members. Contact the ANCO office for additional information regarding any item published in the *ANCO FAX News* or to contribute items.

The *ANCO FAX News* is routinely sent to physician member practices and corporate member contacts. The next regular *ANCO FAX News* will be published on Friday, July 9th.

Comments on and contributions to the *ANCO FAX News* are always welcome and encouraged at ANCO, P.O. Box 151109, San Rafael, CA 94915-1109; Voice: (415) 472-3960; FAX: (415) 472-3961; ExecDir@anco-online.org.

ADVOCACY

[Editor's Note: ANCO meets regularly with national, regional, and statewide organizations to discuss issues of importance to oncology practices and people with cancer.

We continually seek input from members on agenda items for these meetings. Send your issues to the ANCO office.]

ACCC, ASCO, and National Legislative & Regulatory Issues

[Editor's Note: ANCO is a member of the *Association of Community Cancer Centers* (ACCC) and a state/regional affiliate of the *American Society of Clinical Oncology* (ASCO). We regularly participate with these organizations on matters of national importance to oncology practices.]

ASCO continues to work towards ensuring that people with cancer have access to quality cancer care in the community. ASCO met with Mark McClellan, M.D, Ph.D., *CMS Administrator*, and raised questions and concerns about the availability of information on the impact of recent legislative changes in the Medicare program that are scheduled to take effect in January 2005 and on the sense of uncertainty about the future that hangs over

**There is information in the
ANCO FAX News
for every member of your practice
or organization.
Pass it along!**

- ☐ Physician Members
- ☐ Nurse & Office Managers
- ☐ Office Staff
- ☐ Colleagues & Representatives

The *Association of Northern California Oncologists* (ANCO) is an association of medical oncologists and hematologists dedicated to promoting high professional standards of oncology by providing a forum for the exchange of ideas, data, and knowledge. The material contained in the *ANCO FAX News* is intended as general information for ANCO members. Because diagnostic, treatment, contracting, coding, and billing decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, any such information contained in the *ANCO FAX News* may not apply in any given situation. Members are encouraged to contact their own consultants or advisors to obtain specific advice on matters relating to contracting, coding, and billing. The information contained in the *ANCO FAX News* should not be used as a substitute for such advice.

many practices. McClellan responded that preliminary data on average sales price (ASP) will be available soon and that CMS plans to publish the ASP data in conjunction with the physician fee schedule update in July. If the physician fee schedule update is delayed, then CMS will consider releasing the ASP information on at least some drugs. CMS also will consider coding changes as a non-legislative route for relief if it is determined that such relief is necessary. Finally, McClellan commended ASCO for its efforts to collect data that might be useful in making such decisions, as well as any potential legislative changes that might occur in the future.

ASCO also raised questions about CMS activity in the area of off-label uses of cancer drugs. McClellan said that, in general, CMS seeks a faster and more effective process for determining which interventions to cover, but that such a process would envision Medicare continuing to pay for off-label drugs while answers are being developed. While there is no intent at CMS not to cover off-label uses of cancer drugs noted in the compendia, CMS would like to improve the compendia process and would welcome ASCO involvement in assisting the compendia with their work. Finally, in response to specific questions, CMS is currently considering ASCO's request to add several new medical journals to the statutory list of publications that might form the basis of off-label coverage.

Recently, you may have received an e-mailed **survey on Medicare drug administration from the American Medical Association (AMA) and ASCO**. If you have not already done so, then please take a few minutes to complete this survey online at www.surveysolutions.com/cgi-bin/n.pl?n=DJCA&P=../ama/mddrug10cfinal.htm. Or, you can print and complete the survey by visiting www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/12565.html. Your participation is vital, as this survey will establish baseline data on the prices that physicians pay for drugs and on the effects that drug payment changes have on a Medicare beneficiary's access to efficacious medications in a physician's office. The data collected by the survey will be used by ASCO and the AMA to educate Congress and

CMS on the impacts of drug payment changes. Your responses will be confidential and the results of the survey will be shared with you. If you have any questions, please e-mail ASCO at publicpolicy@asco.org

The ASCO *Clinical Practice Committee* (CPC) teleconferenced on Thursday, June 24th to discuss **ASCO's CPT coding proposals** to the AMA's *Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) Drug Infusion Workgroup*. The proposals include:

- New codes specific to intravenous infusion of monoclonal antibodies.
- New add-on codes to reflect the infusion of multiple drugs during the same encounter.
- New codes for complex management of drug therapy for chemotherapy regimens and non-chemotherapy regimens.
- A new code for physician management of complications arising from parenteral drug administration.
- Revisions to the codes for port access and management services.
- New codes for cancer therapy support services, including patient and family education, psychosocial support, social services, and nutrition and wellness counseling.

To view and provide input on the details of the proposals, visit www.asco.org/mma and select *MMA Today* or contact Bela Sastry, ASCO *Cancer Policy & Clinical Affairs Department*, at (703) 299-1050. The AMA will make its final decisions in August.

CMA, MOASC, and State Legislative/Regulatory Issues

[Editor's Note: ANCO and the Medical Oncology Association of Southern California (MOASC) are members of the California Medical Association's (CMA) House of Delegates and Council on Legislation. ANCO and MOASC cooperate on several joint ventures and coordinate activities in the advocacy and membership benefit arenas. Each is represented at the Board meeting of the other.]

ANCO recently participated with the California Dialogue on Cancer in the drafting of California's Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan. The *Plan* will guide cancer control efforts

for California throughout the next few decades. To obtain copies of the *Plan*, please contact Kevin Romero, *Program Administrator, Comprehensive Cancer Planning Unit, Department of Health Services*, at (916) 449-5536.

ANCO is cooperating with CMA in its survey of physician practice costs. The survey process runs from June 1st through July 15th. As an incentive, all participants will be entered in a drawing to win a free iPAQ pocket computer. You can participate in the survey by visiting www.calphys.org/html/bb609.asp.

State Senator Deborah Ortiz's Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 25, asking *Congress* to correct the cancer care provisions of Medicare reform, passed the *State Senate* and is being considered by the *Assembly*. ANCO urges its members to contact their *State Assemblymembers* in support of SJR25.

ANCO endorses the CMA's *Pain Palliation and Politics: Pain Management and End-of-Life Care in California's Regulatory Environment* programs. The Northern California meeting will take place on September 10-11th at the Sacramento Convention Center/Sheraton Grand Hotel.

NHIC/Medicare & DHS/MediCal

[Editor's Note: ANCO meets with *National Heritage Insurance Company* (NHIC) that administers Medicare in California and the *Department of Health Services* (DHS) that administers MediCal in California.]

The *Medicare B Resource* (June 2004) is now available online at www.medicarenhic.com/news/provider_news/ca-mbr/04-2.pdf.

Visit www.medicarenhic.com/whats_new/whats_new.shtml to learn the latest information from NHIC/Medicare.

The most recent *NHIC/Medicare Medicare Advisory Forum* (MAF) teleconference took place on June 15th. Among the topics discussed were:

- Elimination of local (i.e., W, X, Y, Z) modifiers as of January 1st, 2004. Claims received with these modifiers will be rejected beginning on July 1st.

- Elimination of grace periods for ICD-9 diagnosis codes effective October 1st, 2004 and for CPT/HCPCS codes effective January 1st, 2005. That is, 2005 ICD-9 diagnosis codes and 2005 CPT/HCPCS codes will be required on all claims as of October 1st and January 1st, respectively.

- Providers should respond in full and on time to inquiries by the *Comprehensive Error Rate Testing* (CERT) contractor, *AdvanceMed*. Providers that do not respond in full or on time will be subject to medical review, OIG referral, and/or possible recovery of payment.

Private Payers

ANCO has responded to *HealthNet's* letter of May 30th informing providers that Procrit (epoetin alfa) is the preferred biologic for the treatment of anemia in cancer patients on chemotherapy, among other diagnoses, as follows:

...According to your letter, "documented failure on or sensitivity to Procrit will be required before alternative agents [e.g., Aranesp] are authorized."

In general, ANCO believes that Procrit and Aranesp should be treated and covered equivalently by HealthNet and that treatment with either hematopoietic agent should not require failure on the other. Aranesp is clinically equivalent to Procrit and HealthNet should cover both drugs identically. Separating the way these two drugs are dealt with by HealthNet will only produce increased confusion among HealthNet providers as well as increased administrative work for both providers and HealthNet, effectively eliminating any cost advantage of one drug over the other. In addition, some patients and their treating oncologists prefer Aranesp's less frequent (i.e., biweekly) dosing schedule. This results in fewer office visits, is more convenient for the beneficiary, more efficient for the treating oncologists, and more cost effective for HealthNet. Hence, those beneficiaries for whom HealthNet providers determine Aranesp is the

appropriate treatment would have their access to it limited due to HealthNet's preferential treatment of Procrit.

In addition, the Prior Authorization Protocol does not reflect current practice and requires updating. Specifically:

- 1. An endogenous erythropoietin level should NOT be required.*
- 2. Two months of chemotherapy should NOT be required prior to the use of hematopoietic agents.*
- 3. A starting Hb of less than 11 is too low [and] National clinical guidelines (from [ASCO] and the National Comprehensive Cancer Network) and local Medicare policy (i.e., NHIC/Medicare) establish a target Hb rather than an initiation point for treatment. ANCO prefers that HealthNet adopt these treatment guidelines.*
- 4. Two tests for iron stores are redundant [and] ANCO prefers the ferritin test.*

EDUCATION

[Editor's Note: ANCO regularly organizes clinical and professional education meetings throughout the year and throughout Northern California.]

ASCO Highlights 2004

On Tuesday evening, September 14th, at The Claremont Resort in Oakland, a distinguished faculty from ANCO's Institutional Members will present ANCO's annual *ASCO Highlights 2004*. This year's agenda and faculty is:

- **Hematological Malignancies**
Steve Coutre, M.D., *Stanford*
- **Gastrointestinal Cancers**
George A. Fisher, M.D., *Stanford*
- **Genitourinary Cancers**
Primo Lara, Jr., M.D., *UC Davis*
- **Breast Cancer**
Hope Rugo, M.D., *UC San Francisco*

- **Lung Cancer**

Heather Wakelee, M.D., *Stanford*

ASCO Highlights 2004 is accredited by ASCO for 3 CEUs. Meeting announcements and registration forms were mailed in mid June.

ANCO's 2004 Annual Meeting

ANCO will hold its 2004 *Annual Meeting* from Friday evening, October 1st, through Sunday morning, October 3rd at the Hyatt Regency Monterey. Physician members and their nurse and practice managers should plan on attending this event. A distinguished national and local faculty will present the latest national and statewide legislative and regulatory information along with how to use practice management techniques and information technology to meet the challenges faced by medical oncology practice in 2005 and beyond. The

topic(s)/speaker(s) include:

- Dean Gesme, M.D., *Chair*, ASCO CPC, on national legislative/regulatory issues.
- *Senator* Deborah Ortiz, *Chair, California State Senate*

Health Committee, & Steve Thompson, CMA, on California legislative/regulatory issues.

- Joseph S. Bailes, M.D., Peter D. Eisenberg, M.D., and Joe Simone, M.D., on quality cancer care.
- Catherine Harvey, Ph.D., on oncology nursing.
- Bobbi Buell, M.B.A., and Patricia Falconer, M.B.A, on ANCO's DIMA Practice Preparedness Survey.
- Edward Ambinder, M.D., *Chair*, ASCO's *Internet Services Committee*, on information technology in the practice setting.

ANCO thanks

AMGEN, AstraZeneca, Aventis, biogenIDEc,
Bristol-Myers Squibb Oncology,
Eli Lilly and Company, Genentech BioOncology,
Genomic Health, Genta, MGI Pharma,
Novartis Oncology, Ortho Biotech,
OSI Pharmaceuticals
&
Pfizer Oncology

for supporting clinical and professional education.

Make your hotel accommodations now by calling (831) 372-1234. Watch for meeting announcements and registration forms in July.

Additional Education Meetings

Other meetings of interest to ANCO member practices are:

July 10th

ASCO Review 2004

National Oncology Alliance
San Diego

August 20th-22nd

Northern California Protocol Retreat

International Oncology Network (designed for ANCO members)
Half Moon Bay

August 27-28th

Best of ASCO 2004

ASCO
Denver

August 28th

Emerging Approaches to Breast & Colon Cancer Management

National Oncology Alliance
San Diego

September 25th

New Advances in Supportive Care

National Oncology Alliance
San Francisco

October 9th

Oncology Care Update

San Francisco Bay Area Oncology Nursing Society

October 15-17th

Clinical Trials Workshop for the Community Oncology Team

ASCO & Oncology Nursing Society
Dallas

November 6-8th

2nd Annual Pan Pacific Lung Cancer Conference

University of California, San Francisco
Hong Kong

November 13th

6th Annual UCD/UCSF Thoracic Oncology Conference

University of California, Davis, Cancer Center

& University of California, San Francisco
San Francisco

Please contact the ANCO office for more information about these meetings.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

[Editor's Note: All ANCO members are eligible for benefits from the California Oncology Consortium (COC) and Hematology Oncology Leadership Network (HOLN).]

ANCO On-Line

ANCO's independent website has been redesigned and re-launched at **www.anco-online.org**. It features the following:

- A weblog with important news for oncology practices posted on an almost daily basis.
- Links to affiliated organizations.
- A general description of the *Association* and its activities.
- ANCO's advocacy information, educational meeting announcements and materials, and other publications.

ANCO urges its members to bookmark www.anco-online.org and refer to it often. Your suggestions are welcome and encouraged.

California Oncology Consortium (COC)

The COC is a cooperative venture of ANCO and MOASC. The *Consortium* maintains a web site (www.californiaoncology.org); has a ListServ for the exchange of general/administrative and clinical information; and, has a group purchasing organization (GPO).

Web Sites. All ANCO members should visit www.californiaoncology.org for the latest information impacting the practice of medical oncology.

ListSers. The COC operates two e-mail based communications systems called ListSers. The COC-ADMIN ListServ is available to all ANCO and MOASC physician members, practice managers and nurses, and Corporate Member representatives. It is a source for the latest *Association* news, special bulletins, legislative reports, and other information

impacting oncology practices. To post an item to the COC-ADMIN ListServ, send e-mail to COC-ADMIN@californiaoncology.org.

The COC-CLINICAL ListServ is open only to ANCO and MOASC physician members for the secure exchange of information and ideas between physicians. To post an item to the COC-CLINICAL ListServ, send e-mail to COC-CLINICAL@californiaoncology.org.

All members and their staffs are encouraged to subscribe, participate, and use these ListServes to communicate with colleagues about issues of importance to oncology practices by sending their e-mail addresses to the ANCO office.

Group Purchasing Organization. The COC GPO has preferred vendor agreements and discounted pricing with *International Oncology Network* (ION) and *Oncology Supply* (OS), and with *National Oncology Alliance* (NOA) and *Oncology Therapeutics Network* (OTN) for oncology pharmaceuticals and a wide-range of value-added services.

On Friday, August 20th, through Sunday, August 22nd, ION is sponsoring a *Northern California Protocol Retreat* for ANCO physician members at the Ritz Carlton Half Moon Bay. In addition to clinical discussions of lung, colorectal, and breast cancers, a legislative and reimbursement update will be presented. Announcements were FAXed to all ANCO members in mid June. For additional information (an agenda and registration form) contact the ANCO office.

Hematology Oncology Leadership Network (HOLN)

HOLN is a network of state oncology and oncology manager societies from Northern and Southern California, Connecticut, Georgia, New Jersey, Ohio/West Virginia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia. As an ANCO member, you may enroll in HOLN and benefit from discounted contracting with several major pharmaceutical manufacturers for medical supplies and drugs. HOLN-contracted prices are honored at several distributors, including *Oncology Supply* and *Oncology Therapeutics Network*. Finally, value-added services are also being offered to HOLN participants (e.g.,

professionally designed web sites for your medical practice at a substantially reduced price). A **complete current price list of HOLN contracted products** is available from the ANCO office or online at www.holn.org.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Board of Directors

The ANCO *Board of Directors* meets regularly by teleconference and occasionally in person to discuss issues affecting the *Association*, clinical and professional education meeting proposals, and ways to better serve the membership. *Board* meetings are open to the membership. The **next regularly scheduled ANCO Board of Directors teleconference** will take place on July 14th. Please call José Luis González, *ANCO Executive Director*, at (415) 472-3960 if you wish to participate in a future meeting.

Individual Member News

The ANCO Directory of Members & Membership Information 2004 will be published and mailed to all members at the end of June. All members, nurse managers, practice managers, and Corporate Member representatives will receive copies. Additional copies will be available from the ANCO office upon request.

Corporate Member News

ANCO thanks the following **Corporate Members** for their generous support that enables ANCO to grow and expand its services for the oncology community in Northern California, and to provide its members and their patients with substantial benefits in the areas of advocacy, education, and information dissemination:

AMGEN • APP/Abraxis Oncology
AstraZeneca • Bayer Biologicals
Berlex Laboratories • biogenIDEC
Bristol-Myers Squibb Oncology
Cell Therapeutics • Chiron Corporation
Eli Lilly and Company
Genentech BioOncology • Genomic Health
Genta • Glaxo SmithKline
International Oncology Network

Lash Group Healthcare Consultants
Ligand Pharmaceuticals
MedImmune Oncology • MGI Pharma
Millennium • National Oncology Alliance
Novartis Oncology • Oncology Supply
Oncology Therapeutics Network
Oncotech • Ortho Biotech
OSI Pharmaceuticals • Pfizer Oncology
Roche Oncology • Sanofi-Synthelabo
Schering Oncology/Biotech
SuperGen • US Oncology • Wyeth Oncology

We especially wish to thank and welcome *Genomic Health, Genta, Lash Group Healthcare Consultants, OSI Pharmaceuticals, and Schering Oncology/Biotech* as new Corporate Members in 2004. *Aventis* and *IMPATH* are no longer ANCO Corporate Members.

Institutional Member News

ANCO initiated an institutional membership in 2002. We thank our current roster of **Institutional Members** for their support:

- *Stanford University Medical Oncology*
- *University of California, Davis, Cancer Center*
- *University of California, San Francisco*

ANCO members can obtain information about our Institutional Member's clinical trials via www.anco-online.org/advocacy.html.

UC Davis, ANCO, and several other local agencies are cooperating on a National Institutes of Health project aimed at overcoming barriers to early phase clinical trials. You can learn more about this project at www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/cancer/clinical_trials/bigc/

UCSF's 2nd *Annual Pan Pacific Lung Cancer* meeting takes place in Hong Kong on November 6-8th. The course chairs are David M. Jablons, M.D., and Tony Mok, M.D. Visit cme.ucsf.edu/calendar/CourseDetail.asp?CourseNumber=MMJ05003 for more information.

The 6th *Annual UCD/UCSF Thoracic Oncology Conference* takes place in San Francisco on November 13th. The course chairs are David M. Jablons, M.D., and David Gandara, M.D.. Visit

cme.ucsf.edu/calendar/CourseDetail.asp?CourseNumber=MSU05004 for more information.

For additional information on **continuing medical education meetings being organized by our Institutional Members**, please visit cancercenter.stanford.edu, www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/cancer/about/events/index.html, and cc.ucsf.edu/news/events.html.

Publications, Services, & Surveys

Members may still **enroll in ANCO's DIMA Practice Preparedness Survey**, consisting of the hands-on help of two expert reimbursement and practice management consultants via a one-day practice site visit designed to assess and improve the financial health of your practice. Contact the ANCO office for additional information.

ANCO's **model practice statement to patients regarding DIMA** that, while generic and general in nature, advises patients that there may be changes in the way their illness is treated in the medical oncology practice due to DIMA is available in .pdf version for reproduction and distribution or a .txt version for editing from the ANCO office.

ANCO and *Novartis Oncology* are distributing copies (a choice of VHS videotape or DVD) of *Living with Breast Cancer*, a film produced by Alan Kramer, M.D., *ANCO Treasurer*, to each ANCO member practice. The film explores how adolescents cope when their mothers are diagnosed with breast cancer.