

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 sent to physician member practices and corporate member contacts. The next regular *ANCO FAX News* will be published on Friday, November 19th.

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.]

ANCO and ASCO continue to work towards ensuring that people with cancer have access to quality cancer care in the community. Here is the latest with regard to the *Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003* (MMA):

- CMS announced that it would pay physicians (or physician extenders) an additional \$130 per patient per day that

**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.

chemotherapy is administered. To earn the extra payment, the provider would be required to assess the patient's status with respect to nausea/vomiting, pain, and fatigue and to report those assessments through a new series of billing codes that will supplement the normal billing codes. These codes are in addition to the new and revised drug administration codes. ASCO is under the impression that these codes can be used per patient per encounter in addition to the E&M codes (other than 99211). Finally, the assessment fee would be subject to a patient copayment (as are all Medicare services).

- CMS released the 2005 Medicare *Physician Fee Schedule*. It includes 2Q04 ASPs, but 2005 drug reimbursement will be based on 3Q04 ASP data that may not be released until December.

- ASCO's analysis of the *Physician Fee Schedule*, a crosswalk from 2004 CPT codes to 2005 temporary G-codes, and an estimate of 2005 drug allowables are available at www.anco-online.org/mma.html.

- ASCO believes that oncology is in a better place than it would have been without the community's hard work. Specifically, ASCO is pleased with the recognition of cognitive and supportive care services through some of the G-codes. In addition, the *Physician Fee Schedule* now covers multiple infusions per day and payment of injections on the same day as an office visit.

- ASCO and CMS are working together to ease the transition from the 2004 CPT codes to the new 2005 G-codes. Instructions on how to use and document the codes will be developed jointly. ASCO will disseminate this information to the membership; CMS will disseminate this information to the *Carrier Medical Directors*. ASCO has also scheduled two national conference calls for the membership (see attached).

- It is unlikely that the current *Congress* will consider oncology-specific legislation

addressing MMA. However, health care will be a major legislative priority in next *Congress* and this may provide some opportunity to address cancer care reimbursement.

- Members should analyze their practice economics in light of the new drug administration codes and forthcoming drug allowables and continue to report back to ASCO on their impact on patient access to cancer care in the community setting.

Visit www.asco.org/mma, www.anco-online.org/mma.html, or call ASCO's billing and coding hotline at (703) 299-1054 for up-to-date information on changes in coding for drug administration services, as well as billing and payments for drugs.

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.]

The CMA's 8th *Annual Leadership Academy* will take place in La Quinta from November 19th-21st. The theme for this year's *Academy* is *Acceleration: Access, Quality, and Cost in the Era of Consumerism*. Additional information is available at www.cmanet.org/leadership.

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.]

CMS made several announcements on November 1st impacting oncology practice, including:

- Medicare proposed to cover colorectal cancer drugs (oxaliplatin, irinotecan, bevacizumab, and cetuximab) being used *off-label* in nine clinical trials sponsored in part by the *National Cancer Institute*. ASCO is developing comments on this proposal.

- Medicare will expand coverage for positron emission tomography (PET) scans for cervical cancer, and for studies of PET for diagnosis and staging involving a broad range of additional types of cancer if the patients are in certain clinical trials or participating in a high quality registry.
- Medicare will collaborate with the *National Cancer Institute*, ASCO, patient advocacy groups, and others in reviewing the processes used by Medicare carriers in paying claims and setting local coverage policies.

NHIC/Medicare will send the 2005 Medicare Participation Enrollment and Fee Schedule information on CD format. No Internet access is required to access the CD information. The CD will also contain a survey, which NHIC encourages all recipients to complete and return to them.

The *Medicare B Resource* (September 2004) is available online at www.medicarenhic.com/providers/news/mbr_sept04.pdf.

Visit www.medicarenhic.com/hats_new/whats_new.shtml to learn the latest information (updated weekly) from NHIC/Medicare. Weekly updates are posted on ANCO's WebLog (at www.anco-online.org/news/index.html; under California News).

EDUCATION

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

Meeting MMA's Challenges in 2005 Comprehensive Practice Management & Clinical Treatment Strategies

On Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, December 8th and 9th, in Sacramento and San Francisco, respectively, speakers from *National Oncology Alliance* will present three talks on how

to meet MMA's challenges in 2005. Three talks will focus on treatment guidelines and how clinical tools can help practices assess the clinical and economic implications of treatment decisions; on purchasing strategies to maximize pharmaceutical purchasing power; and, on how to comply with HIPAA's final security rule. These programs will take place at the Hyatt Regency, Sacramento, and Hyatt Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco. *National Oncology Alliance* and *Oncology Therapeutics Network* are sponsoring these meetings. A copy of the meeting announcement was mailed in early November.

ASCO Highlights 2004 and ANCO's 2004 Annual Meeting

Did you miss ANCO's *ASCO Highlights 2004* program? A limited number of syllabuses are available from the ASCO office. The *PowerPoint* presentations may be downloaded from and an on-demand webcast of the program (or virtual meeting) is now available at www.anco-online.org/asco.html.

Did you miss ANCO's 2004 *Annual Meeting*? A limited number of syllabuses are available from the ANCO office and *PowerPoint*

presentations may be downloaded from www.anco-online.org/annmtg.html.

Additional Education Meetings

Other meetings of interest to ANCO member practices are:

Through December 10th
Advances in Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma Treatment: The Changing Role of Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation

National Marrow Donor Program, Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research, & Medical College of Wisconsin
ww4.premconf.com/webbrsvp (Code: 553533).

November 11th
Oncology Payer Relationships: Customizing Effective Solutions
 Innovative Medical Communications
 Santa Monica

ANCO thanks
 National Oncology Alliance
 &
 Oncology Therapeutics Network
 for supporting professional education.

November 12-14th

North American Educational Forum on Lymphoma
Lymphoma Research Foundation & Lymphoma
Foundation Canada
San Francisco

November 18-19th

*Health Care Information Technology 2004:
Improving Chronic Disease Care in California*
California HealthCare Foundation & Center for
Health Research, UC Berkeley
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 general description of the *Association*
and its activities.
- ANCO's advocacy information,
educational meeting announcements and
materials, publications, and WebLog.
- Links to affiliated organizations and
updated physician, nurse, manager, and
patient resources.

The WebLog archives important news for
oncology practices posted on an almost daily
basis. Among the additional news items
posted at [www.anco-online.org/news/
index.html](http://www.anco-online.org/news/index.html) since the last edition of the
ANCO FAX News are:

- ASCO's e-News, MMA Special Alerts,
and MMA Todays
- CMA Updates (Triplicate Prescription
Pad Partner Now Taking Physician
Orders)
- CMS/Medicare Website Updates
- NHIC/Medicare Website Updates

ANCO urges its members to bookmark
www.anco-online.org/news/index.html (or
subscribe to www.anco-online.org/news/

[rss.xml](#) using your favorite news reader
software; e.g., RssReader for Windows or
NetNewsWire for Macintosh) 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).

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 ListSers 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.

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*. **A complete current price list of HOLN contracted products** is available from the ANCO office or online at www.holn.org. **HOLN recently announced changes (i.e., product, rebate, and/or pricing)** for *Sicor* contracts.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Letter from the ANCO President

The last few months have been busy ones for ANCO and ASCO, and as we approach the arrival of ASP plus 6% on January 1st I would like to share with you some thoughts on the changes we may expect in 2005.

The 2005 Medicare *Physician Fee Schedule* (including **allowables for drugs based on ASP plus 6% and the new chemotherapy administration G-codes**) was recently announced. ASCO's analysis of the *Physician Fee Schedule* is now available at www.anco-online.org/mma.html.

The 21 G-codes represent temporary codes that will be replaced with permanent codes in 2006. Practices will need to see if private insurers will use the G-codes, or stay with the older codes used in 2004. There are two new codes of value to member practices that allow billing for multiple chemotherapy infusions and for port flushes. These codes will compensate for 10-20% of the losses in revenue resulting from the decrease in administration codes scheduled for 2005. Mark McClellan, M.D., CMS *Administrator*, has written *Congress* stating that CMS will allow prolonged services and critical care service codes to be used in the office as a means of billing for physician services rendered to patients having a severe chemotherapy reaction. This is certainly a novel interpretation, and CMS has asked to be informed of any denials of such

claims. Please report such denials to the ANCO office or me.

When multiple drugs are infused, the temporary G-codes favor using the more complex drugs as the initial code. It is not clear whether antiemetics will be considered the first drug infused, and ASCO is seeking clarification on this point from CMS. Practices should be aware that there maybe some advantage for one chemotherapy regimen over others of equal clinical efficacy based on the scheduling of chemotherapy infusion times. Practices should also anticipate a reduction in cash flow for 2005, and accordingly try to secure credit lines, raise cash balances if tax considerations allow, or prepay expenses in December.

ASCO's goal is to maintain practice revenues in 2005 pending studies on the effect of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act (MMA) on oncology services. These studies, authorized by MMA, are underway, will continue through 2005, with results to be reported in 2006. In the meantime, ASCO is asking for an additional set of temporary G-codes that will restore practice revenues in 2005 to 2004 levels. In addition, *Representative* Charles Norwood has introduced HR5144 that would require Medicare to place a floor on payments for oncology services below which reimbursement could not go for 2005. ANCO members should contact their *Congressional Representatives* in support of HR5144, urging them to cosponsor this legislation and contact Medicare to express their concern over MMA's negative impact on access to quality cancer care.

At ANCO's *Annual Meeting* in Monterey earlier this month, Roberta Buell and Patricia Falconer presented an **analysis of the effects that MMA will have in 2005** on eleven (11) ANCO member practices. The mean loss of practice revenue per physician was \$101,000 due to MMA's negative impact on the Medicare patient population. If all insurers followed Medicare's reimbursement reductions, the mean revenue loss per physician rises to \$206,000. This loss is magnified when translated into loss of physician income, as practice expenses remain the same. ANCO will continue to pay 50% of the cost of Buell and

Falconer's practice analysis for ANCO members who wish to take advantage of this member service. ANCO members should also have received a copy of ASCO's updated *Practical Tips for the Practicing Oncologist* earlier this month. *Practical Tips* normally costs \$70 from ASCO and was provided free to each ANCO member practice as a membership benefit.

I recently attended ASCO's first *Clinical Trials Workshop*. Fifty percent of the patients on cooperative group trials come from community practices. In general, community oncologists rely on the revenues from pharmaceutical trial participation to fund most of their research efforts. In the next few months, **ANCO will be studying ways that we can assist member practices who wish to participate in clinical research.** I would appreciate hearing if any member practices are reducing their clinical trials activity because of revenue losses due to MMA.

ASCO has increasingly realized the important role that community oncologists play in delivering cancer care and in contributing to ASCO's missions. ANCO has a long history of community oncology leadership of which it can be proud. *Past President* Peter D. Eisenberg, M.D., is currently on ASCO's *Board of Directors*, *Past President* John A. Keech, Jr., D.O., is the *Immediate Past Chair* of ASCO's *Clinical Practice Committee*, and *Past President* Robert S. Miller, M.D., is the *Incoming Chair* of ASCO's *Internet Services Committee*. ASCO's *Cancer Research Committee* is charged with issues affecting cancer research. ASCO's *Clinical Practice Committee* (CPC) is charged with issues affecting community oncologists and, in particular, with monitoring the Medicare program. Its members are appointed by ASCO's *President* and include state society *Presidents*. In an effort to help coordinate the activities of these two key ASCO committees, **I will serve as the first appointed liaison between the CPC and Cancer Research Committee.**

In 2005, in recognition of ANCO's status as a premier state oncology society, ASCO has selected San Francisco as the site for its west coast *Best of ASCO* meeting that will be held approximately one month after the ASCO *Annual Meeting* in Orlando. The format differs

from ANCO's *ASCO Highlights* in that *Best of ASCO* is a day-and-a-half meeting with a more limited number of abstracts covered, allowing for a deeper analysis of the key practice changing abstracts. The faculty will be selected from the western half of the country, and ANCO will take a lead role in both abstract and speaker selection. **ANCO intends to add a short professional education session to the end of *Best of ASCO* making it our 2005 Annual Meeting.**

The challenges facing us in 2005 are daunting, but we can best meet them by organizing our energies and pooling our strengths and talents. I believe ANCO's strength lies in its core of past leaders and its member practices, and that its mission is to preserve and improve access to quality cancer care in California.

Annual Election

Four seats on the ANCO Board of Directors are up for election in 2004. ANCO seeks nominations for candidates for these seats. This year's election will be conducted via mail ballot in December. Candidates with the top four vote totals will serve for three years (i.e., from 2005-2007, inclusive). Nominate an ANCO member (including yourself) to stand for election to the *Board* via FAX to the ANCO office at (415) 472-3961 no later than November 19th.

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 meeting** will take place on November 11th. Please call José Luis González, *ANCO Executive Director*, at (415) 472-3960 if you wish to participate in a future meeting.

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
Genentech BioOncology
Genitope Corporation • Genomic Health
Genta • GlaxoSmithKline
International Oncology Network
Lash Group Healthcare Consultants
Ligand Pharmaceuticals • Lilly Oncology
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-Plough Oncology • SuperGen
US Oncology • Wyeth Oncology*

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

National Oncology Alliance (NOA) has joined forces with *Broadlane*, the leading provider of innovative business services to the healthcare industry, as a wholly owned subsidiary. For additional information, visit www.noainc.com or www.broadlane.com/new/new_1.html.

Institutional Member News

ANCO thanks the following **Institutional Members** for their support:

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

For information on **continuing medical education meetings** being organized by our **Institutional Members**, please visit:

- med.stanford.edu/seminars/cme-all.jsp?qcme=on
- www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/cme/Confrnce/Confrnce.htm
- www.cme.ucsf.edu/cme/index.aspx?Display=Date

Stanford's *Evolution of Cancer Therapy: From Pathways to Patients* takes place at Stanford on November 11th. The presenters are from Stanford, UCLA, UCSF, NIH, Spectros, and Power3 Medical. For more information, visit womenshealth.stanford.edu/events/evolution/registration.html

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.

Publications, Services, & Surveys

Members may still **enroll in ANCO's MMA 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. Member practices and ANCO share the cost of the site visit. Contact the ANCO office for additional information. A preliminary report of the *MMA Practice Preparedness Survey* and an **updated model practice statement to patients regarding MMA** are available at www.asco.org/mma.html.