

ANCO FAX News

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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.

This is the final *ANCO FAX News* for 2005.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS
&
NEW YEAR TO ALL!**

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, ASH,
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).

ANCO and the *American Society of Hematology* (ASH) have

agreed to share information with members. We regularly participate with these organizations on matters of national importance to oncology practices.]

Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (PDPs; MedicareRx; Part D) coverage is effective January 1st, 2006. Medicare beneficiaries who are interested in obtaining more information about enrollment, coverage, and more details should contact 800-Medicare (or 800-633-4227), the *Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program* (HICAP) at (800) 434-0222, or visit

**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.

www.medicare.gov. Additional resources for healthcare professionals are available at the CMS/Medicare website, as follows:

- CMS's Toolkit for Healthcare Professionals (www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/provtoolkit.pdf)
- CMS's Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage Information for Providers (www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/drugcoverage.asp)
- Current list of California's PDPs (www.cms.hhs.gov/map/charts/chart4ca.pdf)

ACCC's Medicare Part D presentation is available at www.accc-cancer.org/edu/whitfieldpresentation.pdf. ACCC's *Choosing Directions: Oncology Reimbursement at the Crossroads* explores what Medicare Part D and the 2006 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule means for oncology practices. These webcasts continue through January 17th. Visit www.accc-cancer.org/EDU/edu_webeducation.asp for additional information, dates/times, and to register. You can download this presentation, and the Bayer/Onyx presentation entitled *Demystify Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Benefits* at www.anco-online.org/mma.html. ASCO's Medicare Part D Fact Sheet is available at www.asco.org/asco/downloads/fact_sheet_medicare_part_d11-21-05.pdf (or via www.anco-online.org).

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):

- Regarding the **2006 Oncology Demonstration Program**—
 - ✓ CMS's Fact Sheet is available at www.asco.org/asco/downloads/2006_Chemo_Demo_Factsheet.pdf.
 - ✓ ASCO's easy-to-read listing of the 2006 *Oncology Demonstration Program* G codes is available at www.asco.org/asco/downloads/2006_onco_demo_project_codes-1.pdf. (Also, the complete 2006

HCPCS coding update is available at www.asco.org/asco/downloads/2006_HCPCS_update_112905.pdf.)

✓ ASCO is asking CMS to clarify several of the published G-codes.

✓ ASCO's spreadsheet tool to help you determine the impact of the new demonstration project on your practice is available at www.asco.org/asco/downloads/Demo_Impact_Spreadsheet111005.xls.

• The 2006 *Medicare Physician Fee Schedule* for California is available at www.medicarenhic.com/cal_prov/fee_sched.shtml#60.

• **2006 drug administration CPT codes** are available on the *American Medical Association* website (www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/3113.html; select *What's New*). ASCO's cross-reference sheet between the 2006 CPT codes, Medicare's 2005 G-codes, and the 2005 CPT codes for drug administration is available at www.asco.org/asco/downloads/2006_CODING_CROSS_REFERENCE_SHEET_final.pdf. There is no grace period on the use of 2006 CPT codes—they are effective and must be used as of January 1st, 2006.

• **2006 drug reimbursement remains at ASP plus 6%.**

• **The *Competitive Acquisition Program* (CAP) will be implemented on July 1st, 2006.** CMS anticipates that the physician election process will take place in early to mid-Spring 2006 (i.e., April 15th through May 30th, 2006).

• CMS estimates a **10% reduction in revenue to oncology practices** from Medicare as a result of changes to the demonstration project and other fee schedule provisions.

• **ASCO will hold a national conference call on January 9th, 2006 to address the many Medicare changes taking place in 2006, including implementation of the 2006 oncology demonstration project, revised CPT codes for drug administration, and the Medicare Part D**

prescription drug benefit. To register or for more information, e-mail ASCOaudioconference@asco.org.

Visit www.asco.org/mma, www.anco-online.org/mma.html, or call/e-mail ASCO's billing and coding hotline at (703) 299-1054/practice@asco.org for up-to-date information on changes in coding for drug administration services, as well as billing and payments for drugs. And, **join ASCO's Grassroots Advocacy Network** at www.asco.org/grassroots_survey.

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.]

Noteware Government Relations represents ANCO (and MOASC) in Sacramento. They report:

- While in office, *Governor* Gray Davis authorized a 5% cut to DHS/MediCal physician payment rates. These cuts had not gone into effect because of a CMA lawsuit. A recent court ruling allows *Governor* Schwarzenegger to move ahead with the cuts. Physicians in California are already the lowest paid Medicaid providers in the nation.

ANCO and MOASC have formed the **California Oncology Political Action Committee** or CalCancerPAC. ANCO launched fund-raising efforts for CalCancerPAC in December with its membership dues renewal. CalCancerPAC's goal will be to support candidates sensitive to the needs of oncologists and their patients in California.

CMA urgently needs your help to fight Medicare reductions. Medicare payments will be cut by 4.4% on January 1st, 2006. Over the next five years, Medicare physician payments will be cut a total of 26% while medical practice costs increase 15%. Call (800) 833-6354 and enter your zip code, and your call will automatically be

forwarded to your *Representative's* office. Ask your *Representative* to speak directly to *Speaker* Dennis Hastert and the *Budget Reconciliation Conference Committee* members about your concerns. It is not enough for your *Representative* to sympathize with you. Your *Representative* needs to tell the leaders of *Congress* that seniors in California are already having difficulty getting appointments and finding a doctor. If *Congress* does not act before January, physicians will be forced to stop seeing Medicare patients and the access-to-care problem will only get worse. Please join CMA physicians from across California and tell your *Representative* just how serious this situation is for patients and physicians.

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.]

NHIC/Medicare recommends that ANCO members familiarize themselves with CMS's **consolidated billing for skilled nursing facilities** webpage at www.cms.hhs.gov/providers/snfpps. For a list of codes that are 100% SNF covered, those that can be billed to NHIC/Medicare, and those that can have the professional component billed to NHIC/Medicare, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/snfcode.asp?link=2006.

The **Medicare B Resource (December 2005)** is available online at www.medicarenhic.com/news/provider_news/mbr_dec05.pdf.

The most recent **NHIC/Medicare Medicare Advisory Forum (MAF)** teleconference took place on December 13th. No oncology-specific agenda items were discussed. The next **NHIC/Medicare Advisory Forum (MAF)** teleconference takes place on April 15th, 2006.

Visit www.medicarenhic.com/whats_new/whats_new.shtml to learn **the latest information** (updated weekly) **from NHIC/Medicare**. Weekly updates are also 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.]

SAVE THE DATE

San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium Highlights 2005

ANCO's annual *San Antonio Breast Cancer Cancer Symposium Highlights 2005* will take place on Wednesday evening, January 18th, 2006 at the *Hotel Nikko* in San Francisco. Faculty from *Stanford* (Robert W. Carlson, M.D.), *UC Davis* (Janice Ryu, M.D.), and *UC San Francisco* (Laura J. Esserman, M.D.) will review the clinically most important research results presented at December's *Symposium*. This meeting will be moderated by Helen K. Chew, M.D., *UC Davis*, and accredited by ASCO. Watch for a meeting announcement and registration form in December.

ASCO's Prostate Cancer Symposium: A Multidisciplinary Approach

ASCO's *Prostate Cancer Symposium: A Multidisciplinary Approach* will be held February 24-26th, 2006, in San Francisco. This three-day *Symposium* is co-sponsored by ASCO, the *American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology* (ASTRO), the *Prostate Cancer Foundation*, and the *Society of Urologic Oncology* (SUO) and is designed for individuals with clinical or research interests in the evaluation and management of prostate cancer. The deadline for early registration and housing reservations is Tuesday, January 31st, 2006. Visit www.asco.org/asco/downloads/Prostate_Program_Announcement_FINAL.pdf for more information and to register.

Emerging Therapies for Blood Cancer Patients—A Patient Education Program

ANCO is joining the *Leukemia & Lymphoma Society* (among others) to bring this year's groundbreaking information from the *American Society of Hematology (ASH) 2005 Annual Meeting* to patients and their caregivers. This free program at the *Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel* in San Francisco

takes place on Saturday, January 28th, 2006, and includes breakfast and lunch. The faculty includes experts from *University of California, San Francisco, Stanford University, Alta Bates Comprehensive Cancer Center, and California Cancer Care*. For more information please contact Jeremiah Larsen at (866) 450-0669 or visit www.LLS.org/sf/ash. Please note that this is a patient education program and that ANCO's *ASH Highlights 2005* for healthcare professionals will take place in February 2006.

Additional Education Meetings

Other meetings of possible interest to ANCO member practices are:

January 18th-23rd
Advances in the Understanding and Treatment of Melanoma
Keystone Symposia
Santa Fe, NM

January 29th-February 4th
MindBodySpirit Medicine: The Professional Training Program
Center for Mind-Body Medicine & University of Minnesota
Berkeley

February 14-19th
Cancer and Kinases: Lessons from the Clinic
Keystone Symposia
Santa Fe, NM

February 17th-21st
26th Annual Clinical Hematology & Oncology Conference
Scripps Cancer Center
San Diego

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)*.]

ANCO On-Line

ANCO's independent website at www.anco-online.org features:

- a general description and introduction to the *Association*, its activities, leadership, and membership benefits.
- advocacy information (including ANCO and ASCO MMA resources).
- clinical and professional education meeting announcements and distributed materials.
- survey reports, publications, and WebLog.
- clinical trials information.
- links to affiliated organizations; and, updated physician, nurse, manager, and patient resources.

The WebLog (ANCO News On-Line) posts and archives important news for oncology practices on an almost daily basis. Among the additional news topics covered at www.anco-online.org/news/index.html are:

- ACCC Alerts
- ANCO Meeting Announcements
- ASCO's e-News and Medicare & Quality Care Alerts
- 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.

California Oncology Consortium (COC)

The COC is a cooperative venture of ANCO and MOASC. The *Consortium* maintains two ListSers for the exchange of general/administrative and clinical information and has a group purchasing organization (GPO).

Hematology Oncology Leadership Network (HOLN)

The *Hematology Oncology Leadership Network (HOLN)* will dissolve effective December 31st. The number of available contracts with suitably discounted pricing available through HOLN has diminished to almost nothing. Discount pricing

for HOLN contracted products will no longer be available to ANCO members as of January 1st, 2006. ANCO is investigating alternative group purchasing and discounted pricing arrangements and will make an announcement in early 2006.

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, and ways to better serve the membership. *Board* meetings are open to individual physician members. The next regularly scheduled ANCO *Board of Directors* meeting will take place in January 2006. Please call José Luis González, ANCO Executive Director, at (415) 472-3960 if you wish to participate in a future meeting.

Individual Member News

John A. Keech, Jr., D.O., ANCO *Board Member*, and past ANCO *President* and past *Chair*, ASCO *Clinical Practice Committee*, has been nominated to the ASCO *Board of Directors*. ANCO urges you to vote for Dr. Keech during the ASCO *Board* election.

The ANCO Directory of Members & Membership Information 2005 was published and mailed in June to all physician members; nurse and office manager contacts; and, Corporate Member representatives. Additional copies are available from the ANCO office upon request. The next *Directory* will be published in June 2006.

The following update(s) to the *Directory* should be inserted in the appropriate location(s):

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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
 Bayer Oncology/Onyx Pharmaceuticals
 Berlex Laboratories • biogenIDEC
 Bristol-Myers Squibb Oncology
 Cephalon • Chiron Corporation
 Enzon Pharmaceuticals
 Genentech BioOncology
 Genitope Corporation • Genomic Health
 GlaxoSmithKline
 International Oncology Network
 Lash Group Healthcare Consultants
 Lilly Oncology • Matrix Oncology
 MedImmune Oncology • MGI Pharma
 Millennium • National Oncology Alliance
 Novartis Oncology • Oncology Supply
 Oncology Therapeutics Network • Onmark
 Ortho Biotech/Tibotec Therapeutics
 OSI Pharmaceuticals • Pfizer Oncology
 Roche Oncology • Sanofi Aventis Oncology
 Schering-Plough Oncology • SuperGen
 US Oncology • Wyeth Oncology*

We especially wish to thank and welcome *Enzon Pharmaceuticals* and *Onmark* as new Corporate Members in 2005. *AstraZeneca*, *Ligand Pharmaceuticals*, and *Oncotech* have not renewed their Corporate Membership for 2005.

AMGEN reports that Aranesp has been assigned HCPCS code J0881 per 1mcg for non-ESRD use effective January 1st, 2006. This replaces Q0137 and J0880.

Genentech BioOncology's Avastin (bevacizumab; S0116, 100mg) will be covered for metastatic colorectal cancer (ICD-9-CM codes 153.0-154.8) by DHS/MediCal effective January 1st, 2006. Providers must document in the *Reserved For Local Use* field (Box 19) that Avastin is being billed to treat metastatic colorectal cancer. Visit files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/publications/bulletins/gm/gm20051201.pdf for additional information.

MGI Pharma's Aloxi (palonosetron; J2469, 25mcg) is covered for acute and delayed emesis due to emetogenic chemotherapy by DHS/MediCal effective November 1st. Aloxi may be combined with aprepitant and dexamethasone for maximal patient benefit for both acute and delayed emesis due to highly emetogenic chemotherapy. Visit files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/publications/

bulletins/gm/gm20051201.pdf for additional information.

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:

- cancer.stanfordhospital.com/newsEvents/events/default
- www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/cme/Confrnce/Confrnce.htm
- www.cme.ucsf.edu/cme/index.aspx?Display=Date

UCSF's **5th Annual Clinical Cancer Update** takes place at Lake Tahoe on January 13-15th, 2006. Visit www.cme.ucsf.edu/cme/CourseDetail.aspx?coursenumber=MSU06003 for more information.

The **8th Annual Northern California Tumor Board at Silverado** will be presented by the *Stanford University School of Medicine* from March 10-12th, 2006. Tumor boards on breast, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, gynecologic, and thoracic cancers; hematological malignancies and lymphoma; and, supportive and palliative care will be presented by faculty from *Stanford, UC Davis, and UC San Francisco*, and the community. Registration and case submission materials can be downloaded from www.anco-online.org/education.html or obtained from Jennifer Schafer at (650) 724-2288 or schafer@stanford.edu.

Publications, Services, & Surveys

ANCO conducted its fifth **staff salary survey** in 2005. The purpose of this year's staff salary survey was to update data relevant to practice expenses in the Northern California region and to follow-up ANCO's previous staff salary surveys.

Twenty-five (25) ANCO member practices responded to the survey (i.e., a 25% response rate in 2005; approximately the same as the 26% response rate in 2003, and higher than the 13-15% response rates in 1995-2001). Ten (10) responding practices were from metropolitan/urban/suburban regions; seven (7) from suburban regions; three (3) from metropolitan and urban regions; and, three (3) from rural regions. There are an average of 5.44 and a median of 4.00 physicians (medical and radiation oncologists) per practice in the reported data with a minimum of 1 physician and a maximum of 37 physicians. There are an average of 40.04 and a median of 21.50 non-physician employees per practice with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 288.

Twenty-two (22) respondents review employee salaries on an annual basis with the review date evenly distributed between budget years (7), employee anniversaries (10), and other (9) dates. Three (3) respondents review salaries on some other schedule. Eighteen (18) respondents conduct formal evaluation sessions with their employees; six (6) do not. The range of salary increases anticipated this year was 0% to 10% with a majority (13) anticipating 3-8% increases. A majority of salary adjustments are based on both merit and cost of living (15) with the next largest number based solely on merit (7).

Among responding practices, front office/receptionists/schedulers, billers, file clerks, lab assistants, medical assistants, medical records, nurses, office assistants, oncology nurses, and schedulers are the positions with the most turnover during the past year. Responding practices added billers, bookkeepers, chemotherapy coordinators, front office/receptionists/schedulers, human resources managers, lab assistants and technicians, medical assistants, nurse managers, nurses, office managers, oncology nurses, pharmacy technicians, practice managers, and telephone operators during the past year due to business growth. Newly created positions at responding practices include clinical trials assistants, financial advisors, histotechs, marketing/recruiting, physician executive assistants, and research coordinators.

The 2005 salary data presented below are not stratified by employee tenure or location—each of which may have an impact on employee wages. However, the minimum, maximum, average, and median wages for specific job definitions are reported.

Job Category	Min	Max	Ave	Med
Administrator/ Executive Director	\$24.42	\$86.54	\$45.38	\$44.62
Biller	\$10.00	\$26.00	\$16.67	\$16.94
Billing Coordinator/Manager	\$17.00	\$45.09	\$28.35	\$26.00
Bookkeeper	\$11.00	\$33.65	\$22.53	\$21.82
File Clerk	\$8.00	\$17.75	\$12.12	\$11.50
Lab Assistant	\$10.50	\$25.00	\$15.58	\$14.81
Lab Manager	\$19.01	\$50.00	\$33.63	\$33.00
Medical Assistant	\$9.00	\$24.41	\$15.32	\$14.50
Medical Technologist	\$24.00	\$35.00	\$29.00	\$28.00
Multi-Purpose Worker	\$11.00	\$17.00	\$13.53	\$12.88
Nurse Manager	\$23.75	\$52.88	\$43.79	\$44.34
Office Assistant/Clerk	\$9.00	\$17.31	\$14.74	\$15.25
Oncology Nurse	\$20.75	\$47.50	\$35.77	\$37.71
Other Nursing	\$16.00	\$50.47	\$33.33	\$30.00
Pharmacy Technician	\$10.00	\$37.00	\$21.40	\$19.52
Physician Extender	\$26.52	\$55.82	\$41.35	\$42.00
Radiation Technologist	\$27.72	\$50.00	\$35.52	\$33.48
Receptionist	\$10.00	\$25.24	\$14.92	\$14.74
Research Assistant (RN)	\$32.42	\$35.58	\$34.00	\$34.00
Research Assistant (non-RN)	\$14.42	\$39.90	\$24.05	\$19.23
Research Manager/Coordinator	\$21.00	\$43.05	\$34.53	\$37.46
Small Office Manager	\$15.00	\$60.00	\$26.73	\$24.25
Transcriptionist	\$14.50	\$19.55	\$16.40	\$16.41
X-Ray Technician	\$27.00	\$27.00	\$27.00	\$27.00

Job definitions, complete survey results and data sets, and historical data are available at www.anco-online.org/salsrvy.html.

The November *Journal of Oncology Practice*

(JOP; www.jopasco.org) highlights ASCO's guidelines on sentinel lymph node biopsy in early-stage breast cancer and colorectal cancer surveillance; clinical practice guidelines in oncology; and, Medicare's new Part D prescription drug benefit. Visit www.jopasco.org for additional information.

Membership Dues for 2006

Membership renewal notices for 2006, an annual election ballot, and 2005 *Annual Report* were mailed to all members the week of December 5th. Return your 2006 membership dues to ANCO now to ensure your inclusion in *The ANCO Directory 2006*. Be sure to provide ANCO with the name(s) of office and/or nurse manager contact(s). Those not renewing their membership by June 1st, 2006 will be deleted from the *Directory of Members*, will no longer be eligible for participation in ANCO's discounted pharmaceutical pricing programs, or receive any other ANCO benefits. Contact the ANCO office if you did not receive or misplaced your membership dues renewal notice.

ANCO seeks new members. **All members of a practice should join ANCO.** Provide the ANCO office with the names and addresses of colleagues you would like invited to join ANCO.

A larger ANCO is a stronger ANCO!