

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 member practices (via FAX) and Corporate Member contacts (via e-mail). The next regular *ANCO FAX News* will be published on September 15th.

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 hematology/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) share information with members. We regularly participate with these organizations on matters of national importance to cancer care.]

The *Office of the Inspector General* (OIG) of the *Department of Health & Human Services* released a report on the *Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services*' (CMS) 2005 oncology demonstration project. The report stated that CMS used inconsistent data collection procedures and thus the information gathered through the demonstration project was of little value. What

**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 oncologists and hematologists dedicated to promoting high professional standards of cancer care 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.

the report neglects to acknowledge is that the additional services provided by CMS enabled practices to collect data while continuing to provide a high level of quality care to patients during a time when declining reimbursements for chemotherapy drugs and services put cancer care in the United States in jeopardy. The demonstration project also appropriately recognized the management of symptoms as an integral part of cancer care. Read the report at oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-09-05-00171.pdf.

Members of Congress return to Washington, D.C., in early September and will have only a few weeks to undertake legislative activities until adjournment at the end of September when Members will prepare for the upcoming elections. ASCO will continue to communicate with Members of Congress and their offices regularly throughout September. ASCO members should also be in touch with their *Congressional Representatives* to highlight three urgent matters:

- **Addressing the issue of "underwater" drugs:** HR5179, introduced by Representative Ralph Hall, would give CMS the authority to increase drug payments when practices and institutions cannot obtain certain drugs for the Medicare payment rate. It would also remove prompt-pay discounts that are not passed on to practices and institutions from the average sales price (ASP) formula, to better reflect available market prices.
- **Delaying the impending imaging cuts:** HR5704/S3795, the *Access to Medical Imaging Act*, introduced by Representative Joe Pitts in the *House* and Senator Gordon Smith in the *Senate*, would delay the deep cuts in reimbursement for medical imaging scheduled to go into effect in 2007. If passed, this legislation would protect these essential services that enhance patient care.
- **Reversing the physician fee schedule cut:** CMS is estimating a 5.1% cut to physician payments due to the flawed *Sustainable Growth Rate* (SGR) formula. Congress should act with haste to pass

legislation to reverse this cut and provide physicians with a positive update.

For information on how to contact your *Members of Congress* to communicate your concerns, please visit capwiz.com/asco.

ASCO has submitted comments to CMS in response to publication of a proposed rule that would change the way practice expense payment calculations are made as well as the 5-Year Review of work relative values under the Medicare physician fee schedule published in the *Federal Register* June 29th. ASCO comments focused on two main categories:

- **Evaluation and Management Services:** ASCO supports the proposed higher relative values for many evaluation and management (E/M) codes recommended by the *American Medical Association/Specialty Society Relative Value Scale Update Committee* (RUC).
- **Practice Expense:** ASCO is concerned about the impact that proposed changes in the practice expense methodology will have on relative values for practice chemotherapy administration services.

ASCO contends that the proposed changes to practice expenses contradict the intent of the 2003 *Medicare Modernization Act* (MMA) provision that stipulates use of ASCO's supplemental survey to determine practice expense relative values. While the survey would still be used to determine indirect costs, halting its use to determine direct costs fails to carry out the purpose of MMA as intended.

ANCO and ASCO continue to work towards ensuring that people with cancer have access to quality cancer care in the community. Practice resources are available at www.anco-online.org and www.asco.org/mma. Members may also 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.

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:

- The end of the 2006 legislative year is drawing near. Nearly all of ANCO's legislative concerns have been resolved satisfactorily. AB2631 that would give the Department of Health Services a 60-day deadline to publish a utilization policy for an injectible drug was amended to provide a 120-day deadline. It passed the Assembly and awaits the Governor's signature.

ANCO and MOASC have formed the **California Oncology Political Action Committee** or CalCancerPAC. ANCO launched fund-raising efforts for CalCancerPAC in December 2005 with its membership dues renewal. CalCancerPAC's goal is to support candidates sensitive to the needs of hematologists, oncologists, and people living with cancer in California.

CMA needs you to contact your Congressional Representatives and motivate them to fix the Medicare payment problems before Congress adjourns in September. As you know, CMA has for years been fighting for long-term fixes to Medicare's flawed *Sustainable Growth Rate* (SGR) formula and the inequitable geographic payment locality groupings (GPCI). If Congress fails to act before the end of the year, physician rates will be cut 4.6% on January 1st, and rates will be cut by a total of 35% during the next six years.

Congressional leaders have hinted that they may only be able to freeze payments at 2005 levels. With practice costs increasing at a rate of 4 to 6% a year, a payment freeze would essentially be a pay cut. Tell your *Congressional Representatives* that a payment freeze is not acceptable and urge them to dump the flawed SGR physician

payment formula and replace it with a new formula based on the *Medicare Economic Index* (MEI), which would increase physician payments by 2.8% in 2007.

Although fixing the SGR is CMA's top Medicare priority, **the Association continues to urge Congress to fix the outdated geographic payment localities.** The Medicare geographic payment formula includes a geographic adjustment factor (GAF) that adjusts the payment rate for local geographic market conditions. The goal is to base physician reimbursement on what it costs to provide care in a particular geographic region. The formula calculates a geographic adjustment factor for each county and assigns each county to a Medicare payment locality. Unfortunately, the payment locality assignments have not been updated in 10 years, and the last update was made using 1966 demographic data. Practice costs in many recently urbanized counties have increased dramatically, yet the counties remain inappropriately grouped into payment localities with lower-cost counties. The result is that some physicians are paid up to 14% less than they should be according to their GAF. The ten most underpaid counties in northern California are Santa Cruz (-10.2%), Sonoma (-8.2%); Monterey (-6.7%), Marin (-6%), San Diego (-5.5%), Sacramento (-4.6%), Santa Barbara (-3.5%), El Dorado (-3.3%), and Placer (-2%). Current Federal law requires changes in the Medicare program to be budget neutral. If CMS were to simply reassign these underpaid counties to more appropriate payment localities, the budget neutrality requirement would result in a 4 to 6% cut for counties remaining in those localities. CMA is therefore proposing a solution that would allow any county whose county GAF exceeds its locality GAF by 5% to move to its own locality and be reimbursed at the geographically appropriate rate. CMA's proposal would also protect the physicians in counties remaining in the original payment locality by establishing a geographic payment floor at current levels.

CMA urges physicians to communicate with their Congressional Representatives. Tell them that failure to reform the Medicare payment formulas will make it more difficult for seniors to find a physician and further jeopardize access to care for

seniors. Urge them to show the *House* leadership that he or she supports Medicare payment reform by cosigning both the SGR and geographic payment *Dear Colleague* letters that are circulating in *Congress*.

The ANCO *Board of Directors* has endorsed **Proposition 86, the Tobacco Tax of 2006**, appearing on the November ballot. ANCO encourages all members to support this initiative. Proposition 86 would increase the state's tobacco tax by \$.13 per cigarette (\$2.60 per pack) to provide financial help to some of California's major health challenges. The tax would raise approximately \$2.1B. After providing backfill funds to Proposition 10 programs (\$170M), the funds will be distributed to treatment (53%), prevention (42%), and research (5%) programs.

California law (AB487) requires physicians to complete 12 hours of continuing medical education (CME) in pain management and the care of terminally ill and dying patients by the end of 2006. Doctors licensed in California after 2002 (when the law was enacted) have four years from the date of licensure to complete this CME requirement. CMA's next presentation of *Pain, Palliation, & Politics: Pain Management and End-of-Life Care in California's Regulatory Environment* takes place on September 8 & 9th at the *San Francisco Marriot Hotel* and on December 1st & 2nd at the *Disneyland Hotel* in Anaheim. CMA tailored this program to meet the needs of physicians who do not specialize in pain medicine. Offering 14 hours of Category I CME, this program completely fulfills California's AB487 mandate. CMA members pay a \$335 registration fee; the nonmember registration fee is \$600. Register early and get \$40 off the registration fee. Visit www.calphys.org/html/cc205.asp for more information or contact CMA's pain management seminar hotline at (415) 882-3330. CMA and the *University of California, San Diego*, have also launched a unique case-based CME program entitled *Pain Management: A Case-Based CME Program for Physicians* on DVD that physicians can use to receive their State-mandated CME. Contact UCSD at (888) 229-6263 for more information.

NHIC/Medicare, DHS/MediCal, & Private Payers

[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.]

Physicians should be aware Medicare will not pay any claims for the last nine days of the Federal fiscal year (i.e., September 22nd-30th, 2006). This one-time payment hold—mandated by the *Deficit Reduction Act of 2006*—will defer \$1.3B in FY2006 claims to the FY2007 budget. Held claims will be paid on October 2nd. No interest or late-payment penalty will be paid to physicians or other health care providers whose payments are delayed by this one-time hold. This policy only applies to claims subject to payment. It does not apply to full denials, no-pay claims, and other non-claim payments such as periodic interim payments, home health requests for anticipated payments, and cost report settlements. Please note that payments will not be staggered and no advance payments will be allowed during this 9-day hold. Physicians with large numbers of Medicare patients should prepare now for this cash flow interruption. For more information, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/MM5047.pdf.

Effective October 1st, Medicare will only generate HIPAA-compliant *Electronic Remittance Advice* (ERA) transactions (transaction 835 version 004010A1) to all electronic remittance advice receivers. In doing so, Medicare will stop sending electronic remittance advice in any version other than the standard HIPAA version (835 version 004010A1), or in any other format (e.g., NSF). For more information on *Ending the Contingency for Remittance Advice*, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0646.pdf.

Health care providers are required by law to apply for a *National Provider Identifier* (NPI). For complete information, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand. CMS will host a national NPI roundtable teleconference, open to all health care professionals, on Tuesday, September 26th from 2:00-3:30PM *Eastern Time*. To participate, you

may call (877) 203-0044, pass code 4795739. While CMS will only address questions from a Medicare perspective, this information may be helpful to all providers.

Form CMS-1500 (12-90) is being revised to accommodate the reporting of the NPI. Form CMS-1500 (08-05) will be effective October 1st, but will not be mandated for use until February 1st, 2007. There will be a dual acceptability period of the current and the revised forms. To learn more about the revised form, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/transmittals/downloads/R899CP.pdf.

The *Medicare B Resource* (June 2006) is available online at www.medicarenhic.com/news/provider_news/mbr_jun06.pdf.

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 organizes clinical and professional education meetings throughout the year and throughout Northern California.]

Commercial Insurance Trends & Oncology Practice Contracting Considerations

ANCO is pleased to sponsor two talks for oncologists and oncology practice managers entitled *Commercial Insurance Trends & Oncology Practice Contracting Considerations* with Rees Cooper, Manager, Field Reimbursement, Lash Group Healthcare Consultants, on Tuesday, September 12th at the *Doubletree Hotel*, San José, and Wednesday, September 13th, at the *Hyatt Regency*, Sacramento. Both meetings begin at 9:30AM with registration and continental breakfast. Cooper will discuss the market forces driving change, trends in commercial insurance reimbursement, and possible provider responses to private payer trends. These meetings are supported in part by AstraZeneca and Lash Group Healthcare Consultants. Meetings announcements were mailed on August 1st; you may download a

copy of the registration form at www.anco-online.org; and, a copy is attached.

ASH State of the Art Symposium: Hematologic Malignancies—Recent Advances in Therapy

ANCO is proud to cosponsor the *American Society of Hematology* (ASH) *State of the Art Symposium* entitled *Hematologic Malignancies—Recent Advances in Therapy* at the *Bellagio Hotel and Casino* in Las Vegas on September 15-16th. ANCO members who are not already ASH members are eligible for the ASH member registration rate as a result of our cosponsorship. Enter the promo code "STATESOC" as your ASH Membership ID Number or in the Promo Code field when registering online at www.hematology.org/meetings/sas/index.cfm.

Additional Education Meetings

Other meetings of possible interest to ANCO member practices are:

September 12th

Ask the Doctor About: Innovations in Lymphoma Therapy

Lymphoma Research Foundation
San Francisco

September 13-16th

23rd National Oncology Economics Conference: Gateway to Success for Cancer Programs and Practices

Association of Community Cancer Centers
St. Louis, MO

September 15th

Colorectal Cancer: Update from ASCO

CancerCare
Telephone Education Workshop

September 16th

Advances and Challenges in Targeted Therapies

American School of Oncology
San Francisco

September 19th

Breast Cancer Now: The Importance of Taking Your Pills Every Day

CancerCare
Telephone Education Workshop

September 19th
Better Bone Health for Men Living with Prostate Cancer

CancerCare
 Telephone Education Workshop

September 19-20th
Adding, Updating and Expanding Comprehensive Cancer Programs and Services

Active Communications International
 San Francisco

September 22nd
Bone Health for Women Living with Breast Cancer

CancerCare
 Telephone Education Workshop

September 23rd
Breast Cancer: Depression, Menopause, and Sexual Side Effects of Treatment (for Health Care Professionals)

Northern California Cancer Center
 San Francisco

September 27-30th
Chicago Supportive Oncology Conference

Chicago, IL
 September 30th
Cultural Influence on Medical Decision-Making: Strategies for Health Care Professionals

Northern California Cancer Center
 Burlingame
 September 30th
Carcinoid/NET Physician Symposium

Carcinoid Cancer Foundation
 Portland, OR
 October 4th
Medical Update on the Hormonal Treatment of Breast Cancer

CancerCare
 Telephone Education Workshop
 October 9-15th
CancerGuides 2006

Center for Mind-Body Medicine
 Chicago, IL
 October 15-18th
26th Annual Oncology Nurses Symposium

October 18th-21st
Oncology Congress

New York, NY
 October 27-29th
North American Educational Forum on Lymphoma

Lymphoma Research Foundation
 Los Angeles
 October 27-29th
Clinical Trials Workshop

American Society of Clinical Oncology
 Schaumburg, IL
 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 hematology and 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/Updates
- CMA 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.

ANCO continues to seek ways to make membership more beneficial. The *Board* constantly identifies, reviews, and approves of additional membership benefits. In addition to the benefits derived from its advocacy, educational, and information dissemination activities, ANCO members also benefit from group purchasing activities and value added services from a number of vendors, including:

- **Onmark, OTN's preferred group purchasing organization.** Contact Monique Weston at (650) 871-2108 or monique.weston@onmarkservices.com for more information.
- **Oncology Pharmaceutical Services (OPS),** a division of *US Oncology*. Contact Sean Taylor at (415) 235-4673 or sean.taylor@usoncology.com for more information.

Onmark is hosting several educational programs this Summer to help everyone in the medical oncology practice, including:

- ***Improving Performance in Oncology Care: The 2006 Onmark National Payor/Provider Forum***, September 15th, *St. Regis Hotel*, San Francisco. Payors, providers, and industry will discuss the quality movement, share best practices in delivering patient care, and uncover opportunities to align their objectives.

Please contact the Registrar directly at (860) 633-0062 or jmastro@pharmacygroup.net for more information.

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 teleconference** will take place on September 5th. 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 2006 was published and mailed to ANCO physician members; nurse and office manager contacts; and, Corporate Member representatives at the end of June. Additional copies are available from the ANCO office upon request. Please verify your *Directory* entry and contact the ANCO office with any corrections, additions, and/or deletions. The next *Directory* will be published in June 2007.

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

ALPHABETICAL DIRECTORY OF PHYSICIAN MEMBERS

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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 hematology/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 Oncology/Onyx Pharmaceuticals
Berlex Laboratories • biogenIDEC
Bristol-Myers Squibb Oncology
Cephalon Oncology • Clarient Diagnostics
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 Pharmaceutical Services
Oncology Supply • OTN • Onmark
Ortho Biotech/Tibotec Therapeutics
OSI Pharmaceuticals • Pfizer Oncology
Pharmion • Roche Oncology
Sanofi Aventis Oncology
Schering-Plough Oncology • SuperGen*

We especially wish to thank and welcome *AstraZeneca*, *Clarient Diagnostics*, and *Pharmion* as new Corporate Members in 2006. We regret to announce that *Chiron Corporation* and *Wyeth Oncology* are no longer Corporate Members of ANCO.

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/conferences

- www.cme.ucsf.edu/cme/index.aspx?Display=Date

UCD's **7th Annual Advances in Oncology** takes place at the *Hyatt Regency* in Sacramento on September 30th.

Stanford's ***Perspectives on Pain and Palliative Care*** takes place in Hawaii on October 2nd-4th. Visit med.stanford.edu/seminars/details-documents.jsp?semid=8352 for more information. The program will be repeated on December 8-9th in Palo Alto. Visit med.stanford.edu/seminars/details-documents.jsp?semid=8353 for more information.

UCSF's ***Pain Management and End-of-Life Care*** takes place in San Francisco on November 16-17th. This course is designed for all physicians, nurses, and pharmacists who care for patients in pain or with life-threatening illness. It meets California's requirement that physicians take 12 hours of CME in pain and palliative care. Visit www.cme.ucsf.edu/cme/CourseDetail.aspx?coursenumber=MDM06P26 for more information.

The **8th Annual UCSF/UCD Thoracic Oncology Conference** takes place in San Francisco on November 18th. Visit www.cme.ucsf.edu/cme/CourseDetail.aspx?coursenumber=MSU07004 for more information.

UCSF's **6th Annual Clinical Cancer Update** takes place at Lake Tahoe on January 26-27th, 2007. Visit www.cme.ucsf.edu/cme/CourseDetail.aspx?coursenumber=MSU07006 for more information.

UCD's **online CME pain management courses** are now available at www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/cme/DistEd/WebEvents/PainEvents.htm. In addition, UCD is offering several **live pain management courses** in California and Hawaii. Visit www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/cme/Confrence/Confrence.htm for additional information.

Clinical Trial News

BreastCancerTrials.org (BCT) is a web-based, pilot project, to match breast cancer patients with clinical trials sponsored by the *National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Center for Bioinformatics*, the *University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)*

Comprehensive Cancer Center, and the *Center of Excellence for Breast Cancer Care*. Patients looking for trials may enter detailed information about their cancer history into a completely confidential and secure online database. The patient's *Personal Health Record* (PHR) is used to match the patient with breast cancer trials that medical researchers have registered with BCT. Visit www.breastcancertrials.org for more information.

Learn more about **California's law requiring the coverage of routine care costs for patients enrolled in clinical trials** at

www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/cancer/clinical_trials/bigc/ where you can download ANCO's patient education brochure on SB37.

Patient News

ASCO, in association with *People Living With Cancer* (PLWC), has prepared and published several *Guides to Cancer*. These *Guides* provide information for patients on breast, colorectal, lung, and prostate cancers. For more information, please contact ASCO's *Communications and Patient Information Department* at (703) 519-2927 or contactus@plwc.org.

CaringBridge is a nonprofit organization providing the most widely used free online service connecting patients to friends and families during their challenging times. For additional information for you and your patients, visit www.caringbridge.com.

The HealthWell Foundation, a non-profit, charitable organization, provides financial assistance to eligible patients to cover certain out-of-pocket health care costs, including coinsurance, copayments, and deductibles; health insurance premiums; and, the Medicare "donut hole" coverage gap. The *HealthWell Foundation* offers assistance in several disease areas, including the following that may be of interest to hematology/oncology providers and case managers:

- Chemotherapy induced anemia
- Chemotherapy induced neutropenia
- Multiple myeloma
- Myelodysplastic syndromes

Applications are available online at www.healthwellfoundation.org or by calling (800) 675-8416.

The Patient Access Network Foundation (PANF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving access to needed health services for insured patients who cannot afford the out-of-pocket costs associated with their treatment.

The *PAF Co-Pay Relief Program* (CPR) currently provides financial assistance to eligible patients who are being treated for breast, colon, kidney, lung, pancreatic, and/or prostate cancers, lymphoma, macular degeneration, sarcoma, autoimmune disorders, and secondary issues as a result of chemotherapy treatment. Patients must financially and medically qualify to access co-payment assistance. Patients and physicians can contact the PAF CPR at (866) 512-3861 to initiate a request for assistance or request additional information, or visit www.copays.org or www.patientadvocate.org.

Publications, Services, & Surveys

ANCO and *Sullivan/Luallin Healthcare Consulting* cooperated on a **Referring Physician Satisfaction Survey** in the second quarter of 2006. The purpose of the *Survey* was to measure perceptions among primary care physicians of the work process and provider/staff performance that affect satisfaction, loyalty, and willingness to continue to refer patients to the practices.

Four member practices voluntarily participated. A total of 1,482 surveys were mailed by the participating practices. The mailing generated 270 responses. Among the findings:

- Responses to *What is your overall satisfaction with our practices?* averaged 4.62 (out of 5.0) compared with 4.23 for the benchmarking database. The difference was statistically significant.
- Responses to *Your patient's comments about our practice* averaged 4.35 compared with 4.04 for the benchmarking database.
- Responses to *What percentage of your total patient hematology/oncology care referrals are made to our practice?* indicate that ANCO members have the potential to increase their referral volume as 21.3%

of primary care physicians refer less than half of their patients to ANCO members.

A copy of the complete report can be downloaded at www.anco-online.org/pubs.html.