



The Cancer Support Community's Health Care Principles For Individuals Impacted by Cancer

The Cancer Support Community (CSC) is the largest professionally led nonprofit network of cancer support worldwide. We provide support, education, and hope to cancer patients, survivors, and their loved ones, and we touch more than one million people affected by cancer each year with social and emotional support, wellness, education programs, and awareness activities. Our mission is to ensure that all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action, and sustained by community.

More people are living with cancer than ever before, with over 15.5 million survivors in the U.S. today. That number is expected to increase to 20 million over the next ten years with 41% of Americans receiving a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. Cancer patients must have access to comprehensive, high-quality, timely health care. As such, CSC supports the following policy principles as the United States health care system continues to evolve:

Access: Individuals impacted by cancer must have access to timely health care. *Changes to the health care system cannot solely repeal the Affordable Care Act, but must also replace the current system and include robust patient protections. Changes should not disrupt the care patients are currently receiving. Barriers must be addressed so that patients can find an appropriate health care provider in their geographic area and efficiently enter and navigate the health care system. Patients should be able to access the full range of essential health benefits. Young adults should be eligible to remain covered on their parents' insurance plan until the age of 26. Patients should also have access to clinical trials without the risk of losing insurance as a result of participation.*

Affordability: Individuals impacted by cancer must be able to afford to purchase and maintain their health insurance coverage and prescription medications. *It is particularly important that cancer patients and survivors are not discriminated against through higher premiums and exorbitant out-of-pocket costs. It is also vital that people of a lower socioeconomic status or those who have historically been underserved in the health care system are provided with subsidies or other economic exceptions to ensure that they can afford care. The Medicaid program and subsidies are several key ways for these individuals to access health insurance coverage and care.*

Equity and Non-Discrimination: Individuals impacted by cancer must receive equitable treatment within the U.S. health care system.

Health disparities can only be meaningfully addressed if first all individuals can access equitable health care insurance and services. Individuals impacted by cancer should not be discriminated against based on health status, age, gender, ability level, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic. Further, it is imperative that health insurance companies will not deny coverage to individuals based upon pre-existing conditions or catastrophic illness. Additionally, insurance companies should not be able to place annual or lifetime caps on coverage, rescind coverage (except in cases of fraud), or drastically raise premiums without justification.

Patient-Centered Care: Individuals impacted by cancer must receive patient-centered care that is aligned with their needs and preferences.

Patient-centered care is respectful of, and responsive to, individual patient preferences, needs and values, and ensures that patient values guide all clinical decisions. Patients engage in shared decision making with their health care team in order to develop a plan of care that supports the patient's goals and wishes.

Preventive Services: Individuals impacted by cancer should have access to no- or low-cost preventive care such as well services, screenings, immunizations, nutrition services, and opportunities to engage in an active lifestyle.

Preventive services can help individuals not only prevent chronic illness, including cancer, but can help them to detect and treat disease as soon as possible.

Psychosocial Health Services: Individuals impacted by cancer must have access to high-quality, timely psychosocial healthcare services.

There should be mental and behavioral health care parity. Patients should have access to trained and licensed mental health care providers who provide affordable care. Cancer patients should be screened for distress at all points along the cancer continuum and receive the appropriate services based on their results.

Quality: Individuals with cancer must be able to utilize high-quality health care services that are effective, efficient, and safe.

High-quality health care supports patients' efforts to achieve desired outcomes.

Research: Individuals with cancer benefit from a well-funded, robust research infrastructure.

Institutions such as the National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, and Food and Drug Administration must have adequate and sustainable funding in order to continue to build upon the progress that has been achieved in oncology and other fields.

Triple Aim: Individuals with cancer deserve health care that achieves the goals of the triple aim.

Health care reform was targeted at improving the experience of care, improving the health of populations, and reducing per capita costs of health care. The health care system must meet these three goals in order to be sustainable, particularly for individuals dealing with chronic illnesses such as cancer.