

How Can Adverse Events Information Be Used to More Effectively Inform Cancer Patient Care?

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ISBN

978-1-392-20066-7

Abstract

Due to advances in screening and therapy design, cancer patients are living longer while on or following therapy. Therapy-related adverse events (AEs) are an unintended, but not infrequent, outcome of these treatments. AEs can impact quality of life, adherence to therapy, economic status, and treatment decision-making. This novel qualitative study is the first to undertake a multi-stakeholder evaluation of the impact of AE information on informing cancer patient care in the context of extended survival. The evaluation focuses on a growing subset of cancer patients – those receiving adjuvant therapy.

Adjuvant therapies, used to manage many common cancers, lower the risk that the cancer will return. In this setting, mediating the impact of potential acute or delayed adjuvant treatment-related AEs relative to an uncertain potential for tumor recurrence presents important challenges in balancing risks versus benefits.

Stakeholder perspectives on generating, disseminating, and/or adjuvant treatment-related AE information were elicited via key informant interviews with patient advocacy, clinical care, regulatory, drug development, and healthcare payer representatives. The stakeholders identified future needs in four key areas: 1) information resources, 2) information integration and implementation, 3) value systems and culture, and 4) alignment and ownership of collective efforts to improve the use of AE information in the adjuvant setting.

This study revealed the following novel insights: 1) there is cross-stakeholder agreement that change is needed to improve the use of AE information in the adjuvant setting to improve patient outcome, 2) the directionality of needed changes are similar across stakeholders, although specific priorities varied, and 3) the potential to realize broad systemic progress in the use of adjuvant-related AE information is a challenge that lacks clear ownership. This lack of ownership has adversely impacted resourcing, efficiency, and collective progress and is likely to be a progress-limiting factor in realizing transformational change.

To address the system-limiting challenges identified in this research, a proposed approach to incentivize and support stakeholders in forward action is offered. The proposal offers an infrastructure to promote collaborative and independent efforts in fulfillment of the many scientific, economic, communication, social, and implementation challenges identified in this research study.

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University location

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Degree

Dr.P.H.

Source type

Dissertations & Theses

Language

English

Document type

Dissertation/Thesis

Dissertation/thesis number

13806990

ProQuest document ID

2240097767

Document URL

<http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/2240097767?accountid=14244>