

# Development of an Outpatient Oncology Symptom Management Clinic

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The Symptom Management Clinic (SMC) at University Hospital in Cincinnati, OH, was established to meet identified needs of patients with cancer seen in an outpatient setting. The initial step in the formation of the SMC consisted of the development of a business plan and the presentation of that business plan to the hospital administration. The development of clinic procedures using the creation of a guideline for pain management as an example is presented, as are medication reconciliation and patient teaching. Implications for clinical practice include the essential nature of collaborative relationships among medical oncologists, nursing, pharmacy, and administrative staff members. Interdisciplinary collaboration among the staff of the SMC facilitated referral to appropriate services within the institution and community.

**T**he Symptom Management Clinic (SMC) was established at University Hospital, a teaching hospital-based cancer center in Cincinnati, OH, following a survey conducted to determine the needs for symptom relief experienced by patients with cancer in an outpatient capacity (Whitmer, Pruemer, Nahleh, & Jazieh, 2006). The patients were approached after registering at the outpatient oncology clinic and while waiting for their appointment. A total of 112 surveys were administered and 71% of the patients said they would attend, specifically for relief of pain (50%), fatigue (40%), nausea and vomiting (30%), and sleeping difficulty (30%) (Whitmer, Pruemer, et al., 2006). Based on survey findings, a business plan was developed and presented to the administrative staff of University Hospital for approval to establish the SMC. This article describes that process.

Cancer remains a leading cause of death with an age-adjusted death rate of 183.8 per 100,000 for men and women per year (National Cancer Institute, 2010). The Barrett Cancer Center (BCC) at University Hospital is committed to providing a broad spectrum of high-quality services for patients with cancer and to being an educational resource for patients, physicians, health professionals, and the community. Cancer-screening programs at BCC are actively supported in partnership with the American

## At a Glance

- ◆ Collaborative relationships among oncologists, nurses, and pharmacy and administrative staff led to the establishment of the Symptom Management Clinic (SMC) for patients with cancer treated in an outpatient setting.
- ◆ Staffing and monetary goals were set at SMC's inception and met in the allotted time period.
- ◆ A focus of the SMC treatment plan was medication reconciliation, which improves patient safety by reducing medication discrepancies and possible drug-drug interactions.

Cancer Society. Breast, melanoma, and lung are the three most frequent cancers diagnosed and treated at BCC. Multidisciplinary clinics staffed by surgical oncologists, medical oncologists, radiation therapists, radiologists, oncology nurses, and clinical pharmacists collaborate to evaluate and treat patients. Innovative clinical research is supported by active protocols sponsored by cooperative programs through the National Cancer Institute as well as investigator-initiated studies and studies funded by private pharmaceutical companies.

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