

Supportive Cancer Care: An Executive Briefing



TOGETHER *for*
SUPPORTIVE
CANCER CARE

The Future of Cancer Care Is Supportive

Every year, millions of people living with cancer, along with their caregivers, face a life-altering journey. The impact goes beyond the disease itself, touching every aspect of their lives—health, careers, family dynamics, and financial stability. Due to advances in diagnosis and treatment, people now live nearly six times longer after their cancer diagnosis than was the case 40 years ago.¹

Yet, too many patients still endure fragmented care during and after treatment that leads to unmanaged symptoms, financial stress, and emotional burdens—ultimately resulting in poorer outcomes and unmet needs.



Clinical care is essential, but it's not enough

Many people with cancer are fighting their illness without the complete support they need.

Over
90%
report symptoms that significantly impact their quality of life.

CLINICAL CARE OFTEN OVERLOOKS CRUCIAL AREAS LIKE:

- ✓ Effective pain management or other symptoms
- ✓ Emotional support
- ✓ Impact on relationships
- ✓ Access to resources for informed decision-making
- ✓ Navigating financial stress, insurance, and work-related challenges

This gap underscores the urgent need to integrate supportive care into treatment plans.

What Is Supportive Cancer Care?

Supportive cancer care is a comprehensive, whole-person approach that ensures people with cancer and their caregivers receive essential support—before, during, and after treatment. Unlike traditional cancer treatment, which often focuses solely on treating the disease, supportive cancer care treats the whole person—helping them navigate the physical, psychological, financial, and social challenges that come with diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. It improves patient outcomes, enhances quality of life, delivers higher value care, and lowers healthcare costs.

**Supportive cancer care isn't just about survival—
it's about ensuring people can live well with cancer.**

Supportive cancer care encompasses six essential areas:

Managing Physical Symptoms & Side Effects:

Pain, fatigue, nausea, nutrition, rehabilitation

Emotional, Psychological, and Mental Health Support:

Counseling, anxiety & depression management, peer support

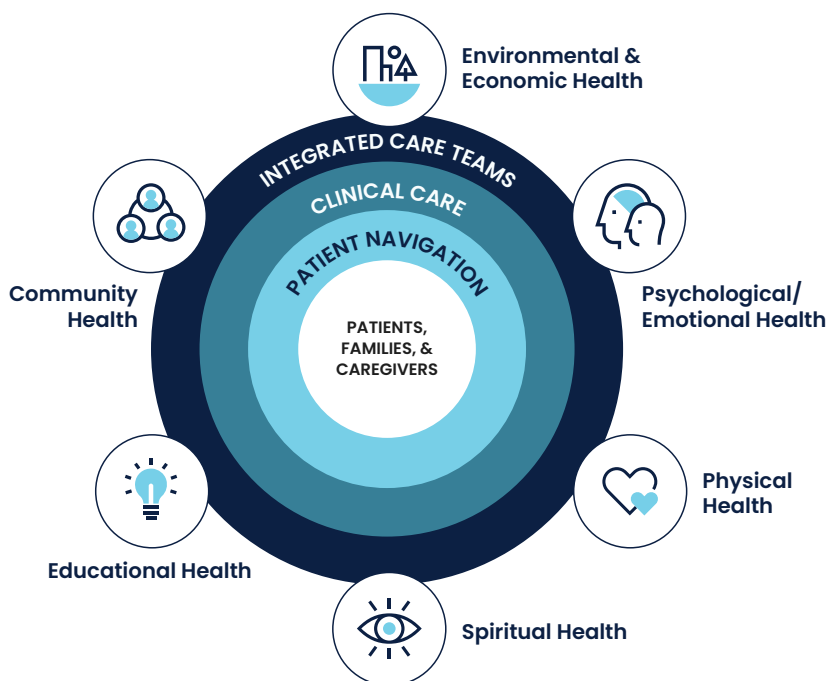
Financial, Environmental, and Economic Support:

Transportation access, safe housing, workplace resources such as paid leave policies and insurance coverage

Spiritual Support: Preserving spiritual identity and faith, access to faith-based support groups or medical support

Patient Education & Navigation: Care coordination, telehealth, decision-making support, and access to clinical trials

Community Support: Online and/or in-person peer support resources, survivorship planning, and rural access solutions

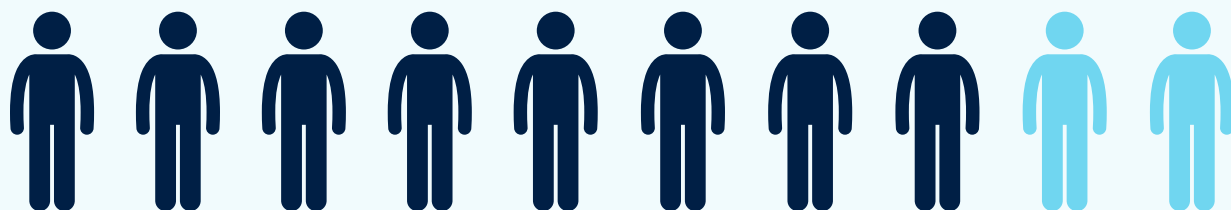


STUDIES SHOW COORDINATED SUPPORTIVE CARE LEADS TO:

- ✓ Better treatment outcomes
- ✓ Improved quality of life for people with cancer and their caregivers
- ✓ Higher value care and lower healthcare costs

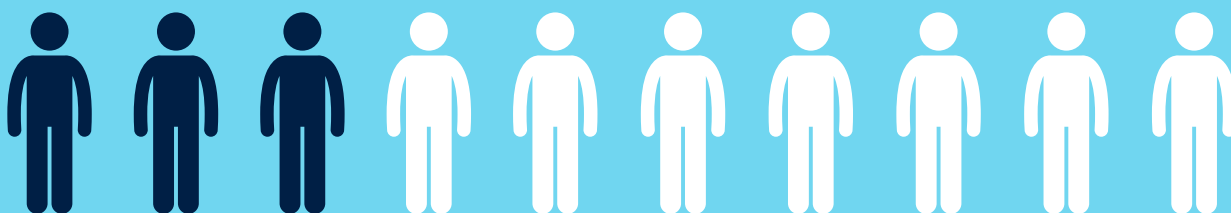
Barriers to Equitable Access

Despite widespread agreement on its importance—95% of providers and patients agree supportive care is vital to health outcomes—significant barriers prevent equitable access:



8 in 10 patients and healthcare practitioners:

- Support supportive cancer care as the national standard
- Agree that cancer outcomes cannot improve unless all patients have equitable access to supportive cancer care



Only 3 in 10 healthcare practitioners say cancer patients have equitable access to supportive cancer care.



2 in 3 patients reported that they have not heard of supportive cancer care or were unsure.

Barriers:

- Low awareness
- Insurance coverage
- Provider challenges

Challenges:

- For providers, top barriers cited were:
 - Lack of insurance coverage for services (86%)
 - People with cancer (82%) lacking knowledge about services
- The majority of people with cancer either do not believe supportive cancer care is affordable or are neutral about affordability (71%)

Why This Matters

For Patients & Caregivers

Patients need more than just medical treatment—they need guidance, tools, and resources to manage their full cancer experience. Early access to a coordinated supportive care approach results in **less stress, better quality of life, and improved survival rates**.

Caregivers also benefit from essential resources that reduce burnout and provide much-needed support.

For Cancer Centers, Insurers, & Health Systems

Supportive cancer care improves patient outcomes, reduces emergency room visits and readmissions, and lowers healthcare costs. Research shows coordinated supportive care leads to:

- Higher disease-free survival rates
- Shorter hospital stays
- Fewer ICU admissions and emergency visits
- Improved symptoms and quality of life
- Enhanced patient satisfaction and quality benchmarks

For Policymakers & Advocacy Groups

Supportive cancer care delivers better outcomes at lower long-term costs. Policy solutions that expand access to supportive care:

- Reduce healthcare system costs
- Improve quality metrics across populations
- Address healthcare inequities
- Create more sustainable healthcare models
- Build healthier communities

With over 20 states already implementing SCC-related policies, we need to advocate for more policies that address the entire cancer journey.

For Employers & HR/Benefits Leaders

Cancer impacts the workplace. Employees facing cancer, or supporting a loved one, experience financial stress and workplace challenges. Employers who integrate supportive care into benefits programs see benefits such as:

- Higher retention of valuable employees
- Reduced healthcare costs over time
- Less absenteeism and presenteeism
- More engaged workforce
- Stronger employee loyalty and satisfaction

45% of people diagnosed with cancer in the U.S. [are of working age](#) (between the ages of 20 and 64).

42% of cancer patients [report](#) their condition reducing their productivity or interfering with physical and mental tasks at work.

63% of cancer patients [report](#) making changes in their jobs or career, such as taking extended time off, working part-time, or declining a promotion.

only 54% of working-age cancer survivors [are employed full-time](#).

THE BOTTOM LINE: SUPPORTIVE CANCER CARE IS THE FUTURE OF CANCER CARE

Supportive cancer care is more than a patient benefit—it's a healthcare solution, an economic advantage, and a public health priority. Whether you're a patient, employer, healthcare leader, or policymaker, you have a role to play in making SCC standard practice.

Together for Supportive Cancer Care Coalition

[The Together for Supportive Cancer Care](#) coalition—with over 35 member organizations including patient advocacy groups, cancer care providers, policy experts, pharmaceutical companies, employers, and insurers—is working to make supportive care the standard of care across hospitals, workplaces, and communities.

OUR VISION

We envision a country where every person with cancer has early and equitable access to comprehensive supportive care.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to make supportive cancer care the standard for treatment, ensuring the needs of patients and their caregivers are met at every stage—diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship.

A Roadmap for Advancing Early, Equitable Access to Supportive Cancer Care

POLICY

FOCUS AREA

Advocating for Policies That Address the Entire Cancer Journey, Resulting in Better Outcomes and Cost Savings

THE CHALLENGE

Current policy for cancer care and survivorship fails to address the full scope of a person's journey with cancer and the range of solutions needed. It is crucial to spread awareness among policymakers about how supportive cancer care can lead to cost savings and better outcomes for people with cancer and caregivers.

THE ROAD AHEAD

"Expanding and initiating policies that build upon successes in legislative and regulatory change related to palliative care, drivers of health, mental health, and the health workforce will ensure that there is coverage for every step of the cancer journey.

To work towards this, we will:

- Map and understand successful state and federal policies across the areas within the supportive cancer care approach and related to survivorship.
- Use the results of the mapping to convene and inform a policy agenda, as well as further plans for research and pilot programs, building on existing efforts by organizations in the coalition.
- Build upon and support existing efforts that demonstrate improved outcomes and cost savings, while educating federal- and state-level policymakers and advocating for policy change.

RESEARCH

FOCUS AREA

Demonstrating the Impact of the Supportive Cancer Care Approach Through Research, Testing, and Evaluation

THE CHALLENGE

There is a need to compile and amplify existing research that demonstrates the proven benefits of supportive cancer care while supporting additional third-party data and research demonstrating supportive cancer care improves quality of life, extends survivorship, and reduces costs.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Elevating supportive care at the federal level and building capacity for sustainable state-level collaborations among care facilities, community-based organizations, insurers, and employers on supportive cancer care will test and further demonstrate the impact of a supportive cancer care approach.

To work towards this, we will:

- Identify and engage states where there is an opportunity to test and evaluate successful supportive cancer care models through cross-sector collaboration.
- Educate key audiences about the positive impacts of the supportive care approach on quality of life, outcomes, and higher-value, lower-cost care over the long term, and advocate for adoption in other states.
- Develop a meaningful set of metrics or dashboard that can be used to amplify the work.

EMPLOYERS

FOCUS AREA

Increasing Employer Understanding of and Commitment to Supportive Cancer Care, Working in Partnership to Support Employees

THE CHALLENGE

Employers can play a key role in driving access to supportive cancer care and need to be more fully engaged as integrated partners in cross-sector advocacy for supportive care.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Employers can serve as key advocates, both internally and externally, for increasing equitable access to supportive cancer care that better helps employees who may be living with cancer, survivors, or caregivers.

To work towards this, we will:

- Create a multipronged program that will guide employers to understand the benefits of supportive care for their employees, evaluate their current policies, advocate for improved coverage options, and amplify demand for better coverage and services within their organizations and industries. Research has shown that early supportive care lowers costs for the employee, employer, and the health system.



GET INVOLVED

Now is the time to act. Whether you're a healthcare leader, employer, policymaker, or advocate, you have a role in reshaping cancer care.

Learn more about the Together for Supportive Cancer Care coalition: [Visit our website](#)

Explore supportive care resources and tools: [Access resource library](#)