

# Interventions to Address the Financial Burden of Cancer Care: Recommendations from the Field

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## BACKGROUND

- At least one-third of cancer survivors' financial situation are affected by their cancer diagnosis and treatment.<sup>1,2</sup>
- A recent systematic review notes that studies have identified risk factors and outcomes associated with financial toxicity, but interventions to mitigate financial toxicity in cancer patients are lacking.<sup>3</sup>

**Objective:** To ascertain and understand recommendations for addressing cancer patients' financial barriers identified by financial and social support staff at cancer centers across 7 states.

## METHODS

- 7 sites from the CPRN's rural cancer workgroup collaborated to interview cancer center staff who provide financial support services at cancer centers across the rural-urban continuum.
- 35 interviews were performed across 29 unique sites.
- Interviews were conducted in-person or by phone.
- Analysis of the semi-structured interviews was conducted by two trained qualitative researchers (RT, MV) with the following approach:
  - An initial codebook was developed based on the interview guide.
  - The codebook was pilot tested by independently coding 3 random transcripts. A revised codebook was then applied to the remaining transcripts.
  - Each transcript was independently coded. Common themes were identified by directed content and thematic analysis.

*"I think the distress thermometer and having an education day that is unique to each patient has made a difference in us."-  
- Rural CoC-hospital*

## Key Findings

- Practices such as screening tools and education-specific visits may be effective in mitigating patients' financial toxicity.
- Job protection policies for patients and caregivers may reduce financial burdens.
- Clinic-based solutions such as required financial counseling for patients and financial training for staff may help reduce financial toxicity and improve processes to address financial toxicity.
- Interventions should be tested to determine evidence-based solutions to reduce financial toxicity among cancer patients.

*"I think it's really short sighted not to have lay navigators or professional navigators engaging with patients, because they relate to us in a different way. We're not the white coat."  
—Urban NCI Cancer Center*

## RESULTS

### Current Effective Practices Identified by Study Participants

*"...we're trying to put together resource lists that are specific to each patient when they're new and the type of cancer that they have."  
Urban CoC Hospital*

- Distress screening tools
- Patient education visits with a financial counselor
- Tailored resource lists
- Patient tracking systems
- Use of telemedicine for rural patients

### Policy Solutions Suggested by Study Participants

- Address "broken system" of policies related to health insurance and drug companies
- Improve policies related to job protection for cancer patients and caregivers

*"I've had a couple of patients... that the minute they got diagnosed with breast cancer, they got fired or laid off. I wish that there was protection for those people..."  
- Urban CoC-hospital*

### Clinic-Based Solutions Suggested by Study Participants

*"It'd be like okay Cancer 101 class, here's this huge financial component and it'd be like a series right?... A lot of people don't know the difference between a deductible and a copay."  
- Urban CoC-hospital*

- Required financial counseling meetings prior to treatment initiation
- Comprehensive resources and networks for financial navigation staff
- Financial training for -staff
- Engage lay navigators and community outreach specialists
- Improved transportation and lodging opportunities for patients

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