

Post-Project Grant Report, Research, Education, Advocacy and Direct Service (READS Grants Program) American Association for Cancer Education (AACE)

Project Title: Exploring family physician training needs to improve cancer patient care

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Narrative section

- 1) We confirm that the tangible output and project goals have been completed. Specifically, our study exploring the needs and perspectives of family physicians regarding their training and experiences in cancer care has been completed with the support of the AACE READS Grant.
- 2) The overall design of this study was in line with a needs assessment of the family physician participants. The two main research questions were “How does medical education prepare family physicians to care for their patients with cancer?” and “How prepared do family physicians perceive to be for their role in cancer care?” Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit family physician perspectives and experiences; each participant completed a one-hour phone interview and 13 participants were recruited. The participant population was 1.6:1 male: female, commonly in the 30-39 age group and in practice for an average of 9 years. Urban and suburban were the most common practice locations. Most were trained in Canada as undergraduates, with residency training mainly in Ontario; 62% had participated in at least one oncology related continuing medical education (CME) session. Interviews were coded and thematic analysis was performed. Three study investigators collaborated on establishing the main themes.
- 3) In our proposal, we aimed to recruit 15-30 family physicians to participate in a one time semi-structured interview. Thirteen family physicians were recruited and saturation was met.
- 4) Summary of findings and lessons learned:

Three main themes emerged from the participant interviews as central to the education of and care of cancer patients by family physicians: Delineation of roles, Oncology knowledge and Education, and Palliative care.

The delineation of roles theme highlighted inconsistencies of where the family physician fits once a patient is diagnosed and begins treatment, and how family physicians see patient navigation through their cancer journey as one of their key roles. Unfortunately, they frequently do not feel ideally prepared by their prior training or available resources for this patient navigator role, with many unfamiliar with how to navigate oncology care if they did not train in the health authority they practice in as they begin their careers.

In terms of Oncology knowledge and Education, oncology teaching lacking relevance to family physicians was a key focus, with participants noting the idea for joint teaching sessions with family physicians and general practitioners in oncology alongside oncology

specialist to ensure relevance to their speciality and daily practice. There was also a desire for more oncology education in general, in notable areas such as survivorship care, treatment side effects and basics of different cancer treatment modalities.

Palliative care as a speciality was described as an avenue to receive oncology education; those participants who did feel more comfortable with cancer care cited their time in palliative care rotations as a key factor in that comfort. Palliation was also the time where family physicians frequently felt they returned to being a major part of their cancer patient's care.

- 5) An oral presentation based on the data from this study will be submitted to the 2022 International Cancer Education Conference, as well as the 2022 Canadian Association of Radiation Oncology (CARO) and American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) conferences. We plan to report the findings of this work in one manuscript to be submitted to the Journal of Cancer Education.