Practices Recognized for Commitment to Clinical Trials

Ten community oncology practices have received a 2007 ASCO Clinical Trials Participation Award in recognition of their commitment to cancer research. The practices were selected on the basis of many factors, including patient accrual to clinical trials over a 3-year period, increased clinical trial participation among under-represented populations, and innovative techniques developed to overcome barriers to patient enrollment.

“Clinical trial research is the necessary step to translate laboratory discoveries into treatments that improve the lives and health of cancer patients,” said Allen S. Lichter, MD, Executive Vice President and CEO of ASCO. “The Clinical Trials Participation Awards honor those practices that have demonstrated their commitment to improve cancer care through clinical research and demonstrated innovative ways to offer clinical trials to patients in the community setting.”

One physician from each practice accepted the award during a special presentation at the 2007 ASCO Annual Meeting, but the emphasis of the award is on recognizing the entire research team. “Everyone on a research team is critical to the success of clinical trials,” says Robin Zon, MD, chair of the subcommittee of the Cancer Research Committee, which reviewed award applications. “The award acknowledges the efforts of all members of the research team, from physician and nurse to administrative staff.” In addition to travel funds to accept the award, ASCO provides funds for each practice to offer an event (such as a luncheon) to celebrate the award with all staff. ASCO also provided award pins for each member of the research team.

The Clinical Trials Participation Award has evolved throughout the 4 years since its establishment, and a new application process and new criteria were implemented in 2006. In brief, practices were nominated by National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cooperative Groups, the ASCO Clinical Practice Committee, the NCI Community Clinical Oncology Program (CCOP), and several community-based oncology research networks. All nominated practices were then invited to submit an online application. A grant from the Coalition of Cancer Cooperative Groups provides support for the award program.

The 10 practices are multisite and primarily located in urban areas. They are similar in that they participate predominantly in phase III Cooperative Group trials, as well as phase II Cooperative Group trials. Most of the practices are also involved in phase II and III industry-supported trials, and half of the award-winning practices reported that they participate in the NCI CCOP. The 10 recipients are diverse, however, in terms of practice size, geographic area served, patient

population, and specialty areas. For the majority of the practices, a high percentage of their physicians participate in clinical trials, with six practices reporting that all of their physicians participate. One practice specializes in medical imaging, and four practices serve patients of all ages, pediatric through elderly.

Another indicator of practice size, the annual number of new patients by the practice, also varied widely, ranging from 42 to 9,300. The annual percentage of new patients enrolled on trials over the last 3 years averaged 1.4% to 32%, with most practices increasing accrual since 2004. Many of the practices serve large geographic areas and provide care for a variety of patient populations, including older patients, minority patients, and patients from rural areas—populations that have been underrepresented in clinical trials to date. Awardees were asked to report the percentage of trial participants who are minorities. The percentages varied significantly (1% to 92%), driven in part by the minority patient base at the practice. Several practices substantially increased the number of minority patients enrolled in trials during the 3-year reporting period.

The award-winning practices’ responses to essay questions about methods used to increase accrual demonstrate a variety of innovative approaches to increasing patient accrual in general and increasing accrual of minority populations. These

2007 Clinical Trials Participation Award Recipients

- Cancer Centers of the Carolinas, Greenville, South Carolina
- Duluth Clinic Cancer Center, Duluth, Minnesota
- Kaiser Permanente, Northern California, Vallejo, California
- New Hampshire Oncology-Hematology PA, Hooksett, New Hampshire
- Northwest Cancer Specialists, Vancouver, Washington
- Oncology Hematology Associates of Central Illinois, Illinois Oncology Research Association Community Clinical Oncology Program, Peoria, Illinois
- Oncology Hematology Care Inc, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Scottsdale Medical Imaging Ltd, Scottsdale, Arizona
- Summa Health System Hospitals, Akron, Ohio
- University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio/Christus Santa Rosa Children’s Hospital, San Antonio, Texas

answers reflect insight into several issues that are integral to increasing clinical trial participation.

The experience of these practices provides valuable information for other community oncology practices wishing to enhance their involvement in clinical research. The *JOP* will share knowledge from the award recipients through a series of articles in upcoming issues. The content of the articles will be based on the essay questions and supplemented by in-depth interviews with research team members from the 10 practices.

“The practices selected for the Clinical Trials Participation Awards have demonstrated impressive innovation in enhancing their involvement in clinical trials,” says Dr Zon. “I encourage community oncologists to take advantage of the valuable learning opportunity afforded by this series of articles based on the recipients’ experience, and to apply some of the techniques in their own practices.”

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