Impact of COVID-19 on oncology clinical trials discussed

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(HealthDay)—The impact of COVID-19 on oncology clinical trials and long-term implications are discussed in a study and recommendations published in *JCO Oncology Practice*.

David Waterhouse, M.D., M.P.H., from Oncology Hematology Care in Cincinnati, Ohio, and colleagues surveyed clinical programs to learn about the changes and challenges experienced by clinical trial programs: 14 survey respondents represented academic programs and 18 represented community-based programs. The respondents indicated that programs are halting or prioritizing screening and/or enrollment for certain clinical trials. Remote patient visits and monitoring with sponsors and/or research organizations are being conducted where possible; this shift was viewed positively. Challenges of conducting clinical trials were reported and included difficulties with enrollment and protocol adherence due to decreased patient visits, staffing constraints, and limited availability of ancillary services. Many of the adaptations to trials made during the pandemic could provide an opportunity to improve the clinical trial system.

Based on these results, the Association for Clinical Oncology provided recommendations to sustain access to cancer care. These include permanent expanded support for telehealth; additional and immediate financial support for practices given the considerable and unprecedented stressors on practices; passage of federal oral parity legislation, to help patients to limit their exposure to COVID-19 by allowing them to choose to switch from intravenous to oral drugs that can be taken at home; prevention of additional drug shortages; and adapting clinical trials to the COVID-19 environment.

"While we're in very tough times, this crisis presents an opportunity to improve the quality and resiliency of cancer care," ASCO President Howard A. "Skip" Burris III, M.D., said in a statement.

More information: Abstract/Full Text (subscription or payment may be required) Recommendations (subscription or payment may be required)