



CoC Flash

A Monthly News Update from the Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons



March 2003

Highlights of the Month:

- Thank You and Congratulations: National Cancer Registrars Week April 7-11, 2003
- ROADS to FORDS Conversion Rules
- CoC Announces New Cancer Program Standards

Thank You and Congratulations: National Cancer Registrars Week April 7-11, 2003

The Commission on Cancer and the American Joint Committee on Cancer are both pleased and honored to have the opportunity to work with Cancer Registrar professionals across the nation. Cancer Registrars provide an invaluable service that requires specialized knowledge and skill. The entire cancer community --from patients to physicians, from research groups to those evaluating outcomes-- is grateful for the important efforts of these individuals. Without their dedication, our efforts to reduce cancer morbidity and mortality would not be possible, and the standards of cancer patient care and treatment would not be as high as they are today. So, on behalf of the CoC and AJCC, we thank you for the truly important work you do and congratulate you on a job well done.

ROADS to FORDS Conversion Rules

The CoC has completed its work on revising the *ROADS* to *FORDS* conversion rules and computer algorithm. The updated set of conversion tables and the executable conversion code are posted on our Web site at: <http://www.facs.org/dept/cancer/ncdb/roadstofords.html>. Changes and updates made to the conversion rules since the prior release on 01/31/03 are highlighted in yellow to facilitate an easier review by users.

Be sure to review and/or print the *FORDS* "Individual Page Corrections" file dated 3/06/03. Of particular note are the breast surgery reconstruction codes for Total/Simple Mastectomies which have been added to page 269 (these codes have been incorporated into the conversion rules). Further updates to *FORDS* will be held until later this summer when the Collaborative Staging data items will be added to the manual.

CoC Announces New Cancer Program Standards

Implementation Date

The Committee on Approvals met on February 24, 2003, and approved the revised Commission on Cancer (CoC) Cancer Program Standards. To be sensitive to program needs, to thoroughly review the new standards, and to adequately prepare for survey, the Committee on Approvals voted unanimously to delay implementation of the new standards until **January 1, 2004**, rather than begin implementation July 1, 2003. This delay should enable a smoother transition for all programs.

Publication

A complementary electronic version of the manual will be available online in July. A published version of the manual will be available in late July or early August. The availability of the manual will be announced at the appropriate time. Details and information for ordering will be posted on our Web site at <http://www.facs.org/>. The price is \$30.00.

Highlights of Changes

CoC Cancer Program Standards 2004 contains 36 standards for cancer programs. All standards are mandatory and form the basis for the approval award. Commendation ratings have been established for nine standards (25%). A list of the 36 standards and the nine areas of commendation will be posted on our Web site by Monday, April 7.

The manual format has been changed so that each chapter begins with a purpose statement followed by the detailed

information for each standard.

- the standard definition and requirement
- an outline of the specification by category
- an explanation of the documentation needed to demonstrate compliance
- the definitions used for rating compliance

Category-specific requirements have been defined for many standards and are designed to recognize the type of facility, services provided, and cases accessioned. For example, additional cancer committee members are required in Network Cancer Programs, NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center Programs, Teaching Hospital Cancer Programs, and Community Hospital Comprehensive Cancer Programs.

Phase-in Period

Two standards will require a phase-in period.

Standard 3.1: Case abstracting is performed or supervised by a Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR).

All cancer programs approved by the Commission on Cancer must comply with this standard by January 1, 2006. Programs surveyed prior to January 1, 2006, that are working towards compliance with this standard will be required to show documentation of recruitment efforts and/or plans for current staff certification.

Standard 4.3: AJCC staging is assigned by the managing physician and recorded on a staging form in the medical record on 90% of eligible annual analytic cases.

All cancer programs approved by the Commission on Cancer will continue to meet the current requirement for AJCC staging to be assigned by the managing physician and recorded in the medical record.

By January 1, 2005, all cancer programs approved by the Commission on Cancer are required to implement the use of a staging form in the medical record to document staging assigned by the managing physician.

Programs surveyed prior to January 1, 2005, that are working to implement the use of staging forms will be assessed on physician staging in the medical record and will be required to show documentation of efforts and/or plans for implementation.

Survey Application and Compliance Ratings

The diskette/CD version of the survey application will be replaced with a Web-based Survey Application Record (SAR). Development of the SAR is proceeding on schedule and programs surveyed in 2004 will be required to use it. Each cancer registrar will be provided with password-protected access to their facility's SAR, and notified when the application is available for completion.

A portion of the information collected in the SAR that describes the facility's resources and services is shared with the American Cancer Society (ACS) as part of the Facility Information Profile System (FIPS). The data sharing activity of the FIPS program is designed to benefit all CoC-approved cancer programs.

Each facility will continue to use the self-assessment process by using the SAR to rate program compliance with each standard. The surveyor and Cancer Programs staff will also assign a compliance rating through the SAR. Approval awards continue to be based on a consensus of ratings by the surveyor and Cancer Programs staff.

Tools and Resources for Cancer Programs

CoC resources and tools for cancer programs have been designed to assist programs in tracking and monitoring program activity. The resources and tools will also be posted on our Web site.

Commendations

Commendations received for individual standards will be acknowledged in the Approved Cancer Program Performance Report that is provided to the program following the survey.

A program that receives a commendation rating in all nine defined areas along with a compliance rating for all other (27) standards will earn the "CoC Outstanding Achievement Award." Awards will be granted to each program upon completion of the survey and evaluation of compliance with the established criteria. This award will be in place until the next survey.

The purpose of the "CoC Outstanding Achievement Award" is to:

- Recognize cancer programs that strive for excellence in providing quality care to the cancer patient

- Motivate other programs to work towards improving their care
- Foster communication between award programs and other programs to:
 - share best practices
 - serve as a resource
 - act as a "champion" for CoC cancer program approval

Cancer programs receiving this award will receive:

- a letter of recognition from the CoC chair addressed to the CEO/Administrator
- a specially designed press release, marketing information and a special certificate
- CoC publicity via the CoC Flash and the CoC Web site
- acknowledgement in a public forum including the CoC Annual Meeting

Educational Activities

The CoC will kick-off training on the CoC Cancer Program Standards 2004 during its Survey Savvy workshop to be held May 16-17, 2003, following the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA) Annual Meeting. An additional Survey Savvy workshop to be held in Chicago is being planned for Spring, 2004. The date has yet to be determined, but will be announced in this newsletter and on the Web site.

Training for surveyors and Independent Cancer Program Consultants has been scheduled for September 25-26, 2003 at the American College of Surgeons headquarters in Chicago. New criteria for Independent Cancer Program Consultants and an application for the training program will be posted on our Web site by May 31, 2003.

Finally, after July, Speakers Bureau volunteers will be available to make a slide presentation of the Cancer Program Standards 2004 at state and national meetings. See our Web site at <http://www.facs.org/dept/cancer/coc/presrequests.html> for details and information.

Health of the CoC Approvals Program

At the end of 2002, 1,422 facilities held CoC approval. Though the overall number of CoC-approved programs has declined slightly in the past few years due to network formations, mergers, and some withdrawals, the Approvals Program continues to be very strong.

Last year, six new cancer programs joined our list of approved programs and twenty-six additional new programs are awaiting survey in 2003. Two Network Cancer Programs were surveyed and approved in 2002 bringing the total number of approved Network Cancer Programs to seven. In addition, the CoC provided consultative services to four other Network Cancer Programs preparing for initial survey.

Twenty-two facilities withdrew from the approvals program in 2002 citing reasons ranging from hospital closure to the expense involved with maintaining the program or the cancer registry. Several plan to reapply in the future. It is important to note that two approved cancer programs surveyed during this time did not meet CoC standards and were not re-approved.

The Commission is pleased to present its new cancer program standards and it anticipates that the modifications outlined in Cancer Program Standards 2004 will enable and encourage facilities to apply or reapply for survey.