The American College of Surgeons Cancer Surgery Standards Program

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) Cancer Programs new Cancer Surgery Standards Program (CSSP) aims to improve the quality of surgical care provided to cancer patients by implementing standards for cancer surgery and standardizing the way operative data are documented and communicated.

An increasing body of evidence demonstrates that the adherence to specific operative techniques during cancer surgery directly improves key patient outcomes, including survival and quality of life.\(^1,2\) The CSSP will help to establish these evidence-based standards from clinical trials and research; educate surgeons, trainees, and staff to help them meet those standards; and build and disseminate tools, including synoptic operative report templates and associated electronic infrastructure, to support documentation and implementation and improve adherence.

The program’s mission is to define and implement cancer surgery standards so institutions and surgeons can readily adopt and easily integrate them into their daily workflow. The CSSP brings together experts in cancer surgery, cancer registry management, digital tools/frameworks, and surgical coding to develop synoptic operative reporting templates and point-of-care electronic documentation tools. Integrated into electronic health records, these templates and tools enable surgeons to document the outcome of a cancer operation. The CSSP also develops disease-specific cancer surgery protocols, which provide guidance on the collection of essential data for cancer surgery. These tools will be shared with CoC-accredited facilities to help implement the operative standards.

CSSP has its origin in the ACS Cancer Research Program (ACS CRP), which was created by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology. The ACS CRP’s Cancer Care Standards Development Committee was established to evaluate the evidence that exists to support the development of standardized surgical approaches. The resulting Operative Standards for Cancer Surgery manuals offer concrete, evidence-based recommendations on cancer surgery techniques critical to achieving optimal outcomes.

The 2020 Commission on Cancer (CoC) standards for accreditation, Optimal Resources for Cancer Care, include six operative standards based on the evidence published in the Operative Standards for Cancer Surgery. These standards require accredited facilities to track comprehensive data for select cancer sites. The CSSP is tasked with developing tools and educational content to help implement these standards at CoC-accredited facilities starting in 2021.

The CSSP synoptic operative reporting tools will allow for easy monitoring of adherence to CoC standards and provide linkage to critical cancer and surgical codes. Additionally, these synoptic operative reporting tools and templates will ensure capture of the vital information that otherwise may be missing from narrative operative reports.\(^3\) In the future the CSSP tools will help automate data acquisition into the National Cancer Database (NCDB), a joint program of ACS and the American Cancer Society, which is largest cancer registry of its kind.
