

The US Oncology Network

# COVID-19 Response

**Maintaining Viability of Community  
Oncology Practices through the Pandemic**





## At a Glance

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all Americans and put unprecedented strains on the U.S. healthcare system, including The US Oncology Network's more than 450 community-based cancer facilities across 25 states. As COVID-19 spread across the country, oncology patient volumes dropped, non-emergent procedures were halted, and treatment regimens were disrupted. With COVID-19 increasing expenses and decreasing patient volumes, practices in The Network experienced significant financial pressures. Committed to supporting member practices, The Network promised to give practices the tools they needed to safeguard patient and staff safety, optimize patient care, and keep their doors open. The Network delivered on its promise. Not only did all the practices in The Network survive, but many of the practices were also able to achieve the financial performance goals they had set before the pandemic.



### Financial Strain

The US Oncology Network's 13,000+ physicians, nurses, clinicians and cancer care specialists treat nearly 1 million cancer patients annually with a common vision of expanding access to the highest-quality, most cost-effective, integrated cancer care in their communities. When preventive shelter-in-place orders swept across the country, oncology patient care was dramatically impacted as practices balanced the administration of cancer treatment with the risk of exposure to the novel coronavirus.

Patient volumes dropped, biopsies and non-emergent surgical procedures were halted, and treatment regimens were disrupted or altered. In addition, practices had to implement new procedures for providing patient care while protecting the health and safety of patients and staff.



### Grading The Network's COVID-19 Response

A survey of physicians and practice leadership gauged satisfaction with McKesson's support of practices through COVID-19:<sup>1</sup>

- Average score was 8.1 out of 10
- COVID support was rated a 9 or 10 by 52% of respondents overall
- 47% of Executive Directors/Practice Administrators rated the response a 10


<sup>1</sup> Survey results extracted from The US Oncology Network's annual Net Promoter Score (NPS) customer satisfaction survey, February 2021.



## Rapid Response

The first priority was to create a safe working environment via work from home for applicable staff and prioritize practices in The Network for distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE). Regular rollouts of best practices being utilized at clinics and weekly calls kept practice leadership informed and rapidly identified their evolving needs. The Network provided guidance and engaged best-in-class consultants to help practices secure and manage federal relief program funds, including the Provider Relief Fund (PRF) and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Our financial efforts helped practices support their staff and maintain payroll and cash flow, helping them keep their doors open to treat patients.

Amidst the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Public Policy team supported practices in applying, receiving and complying with Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act financial assistance programs, **securing millions of dollars** in relief funds when practices needed it most.



Through the support of McKesson, The Network covered **100% of paid leaves** under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) for essential administrative employees.




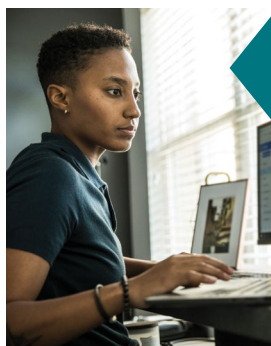
**\$1 million pledge** to Employee Assistance Fund for all eligible employees in The Network. Initially focused on grants related to COVID-19, the Fund has been expanded to support employees impacted by a variety of natural disasters including wildfires in the West, hurricanes, winter storms in Texas and the East Coast, and more. To date, \$955K has been granted.



**4,200 Network employees** transitioned to remote work within two weeks to continue supporting patient billing operations and technical support for practice employees.



Despite national shortages, we supplied PPE to ensure **clinic staff and patient safety**, including gloves, gowns and masks during the first three months of the pandemic.

Mobilized a team of 30+ Network professionals to set up a **COVID task force** to support planning, documenting and executing on practice operational needs.





### The Network's Commitment to Practices

Amidst this public health crisis, our commitment to the vision of quality cancer care remained steadfast — as did our commitment to support practices in The Network. The Network promised to provide practices the clinical, operational and financial tools they needed to optimize patient care, safeguard the safety of patients and staff, and maintain practice viability. Within days of the onset of the pandemic, we activated a Covid Task Force, which included operations, finance and IT teams. The Covid Task Force met several times throughout the week to address the most pertinent needs of practices.



### Maintaining Practices' Financial Health

Not only did all the practices in The Network remain open despite months of significant drops in patient volumes, but the majority came through the pandemic achieving strong financial health. In addition to the financial bridge offered by PRF and PPP funds, McKesson leveraged the scale of The Network to negotiate better drug rebates, enabling practices to take advantage of unprecedented economics during this time. As a result, the majority of practices were able to achieve their financial goals even during the pandemic. At the height of the pandemic, Most Favored Nation (MFN) drug pricing was introduced. Oncology practices across the country would have been negatively impacted if the MFN ruling had been passed. The US Oncology Network, with the support of the Network practices, played a pivotal role in stopping MFN from moving ahead.

“ This isn't the first crisis we faced in oncology, but I knew that there were people doing the work that was going to benefit me and my patients while we were able to focus on treating our patients. With that came a certain level of calm because I knew that we had an army behind us that was doing its absolute best.”

**TODD DOYLE, M.D.**  
New York Oncology Hematology  
*Radiation Oncologist and  
Practice President*





### Accelerating Telemedicine Adoption

Within weeks, The Network implemented two telemedicine technology solutions to enable physicians and clinicians to connect with patients. In addition to covering the implementation costs and first three months of physician and staff licenses, The Network worked with each practice to optimize the use of telemedicine so they could continue utilizing the platform to bill and generate revenue. The US Oncology Network, with the support of The Network practices, played a pivotal role in stopping MFN from moving ahead.

“ If our practice wasn’t part of The US Oncology Network, we wouldn’t have access to the vast knowledge base, support systems and expertise needed during the pandemic. It’s not just about the unknown of the pandemic; our alliance is critical for the constant ongoing demands of healthcare. ”

**AMY McNALLY, M.D.**  
Minnesota Oncology  
*Gynecologic Oncologist*

To learn more about The US Oncology Network, visit [usoncology.com](https://www.usoncology.com).



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