

Case Study

Empowering community oncology to thrive through advocacy and action





Community oncology faces a rapidly evolving landscape driven by complex government rules and regulations that can threaten practice viability. Keeping up with and responding to new developments that can negatively impact your practice and patient care can be challenging. Practices in The US Oncology Network (The Network) count on The Network's dedicated, highly skilled Government Relations and Public Policy team to fervently support their practices, providers and patients by protecting access to quality care in the community setting. We are dedicated to advancing policy issues at all levels that benefit community oncology.



Great minds working together on your behalf

The Network's Government Relations and Public Policy team combines years of Capitol Hill and State Legislature experience with a diverse healthcare policy background, leveraging a deep understanding of legislative processes and standards. Drawing on this expertise, the team crafts new policies, analyzes proposed changes, strategizes on how to achieve optimal outcomes and responds appropriately, often working closely with individual practices on specific issues. Our organization stays in touch with today's challenges while constantly safeguarding for the future.



Protecting community oncology

In addition to our dedicated team's support, we empower practices to thrive in today's volatile environment by enabling face-to-face exposure with key members of local, state and federal governments. We help practices collaborate with these stakeholders and coalitions and get practices a seat at the table on critical issues. Concurrently, we amplify their voices on Capitol Hill and at State Legislatures and reinforce their reputation as oncology experts and leaders in their communities.

Working with The Network practices, legislators and regulators, we relentlessly strive to make good policies that achieve our key goals — to protect:

- ✓ The patient-physician relationship,
- ✓ The ability to provide access to high quality, affordable care, and
- ✓ The practices' long-term viability.





The US Oncology Network is committed to the success of independent community oncology practices. Through strategy, education and advocacy, we ensure the viability of community oncology.



A closer look: Perseverance pays big dividends in Nevada

Some successes take longer than others, but we remain dedicated to causes that advance patient care and protect community oncology until we prevail.

Situation

Nevada's Board of Pharmacy (BOP) regulations required oncology physicians to independently maintain and manage their own oral medication inventories instead of allowing physicians within a group practice to share inventory, a prohibitive restriction for community oncology practices like Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada (CCCN), a practice within The Network. Recognizing the negative impact that this regulation had on The Network's practice and the patients they serve, our team worked for over five years to reverse this rule.

The Network's approach

A lot of strategizing went into achieving this regulation change. We considered either attempting a legislative bill or trying to revise regulations through the BOP. We chose to work with the BOP, but our first effort with the organization was ineffective due to the political landscape at the time.

In 2020, the state declared a public health emergency due to COVID-19. During that time, a temporary executive order was issued allowing physicians to mail prescription drugs to patients, a relief measure CCCN was unable to participate in since they did not have a Medically Integrated Dispensing (MID) platform due to the prior regulations that made MID platforms administratively burdensome and cost prohibitive.

We contacted the Governor and key legislative stakeholders to bring to light that practices like CCCN, who were caring for one of the most vulnerable populations during the pandemic, were not able to take advantage of the opportunity. This got the attention of the BOP and the organization decided to collaborate with us.





We worked with CCCN to provide physician, patient and caregiver testimony, as well as supportive comments from the Nevada State Medical Association and the COO of Cancer Care Specialists in Reno.



A new strategic action plan was developed to once again approach the BOP. The BOP hosted two workshops to address our request to change the current policy. We worked with CCCN to provide physician, patient and caregiver testimony, as well as supportive comments from the Nevada State Medical Association and the COO of Cancer Care Specialists in Reno, a smaller practice whose physicians were dispensing and could speak to the difficulty of managing separate inventories. Following the second workshop in January 2021, several BOP members visited CCCN to see the impact the practice has on the community.

Over the next few months, we communicated with a key BOP staff member who assured us the rule change would be approved. The first BOP public hearing was held in April 2022 and the vote on the proposed regulation change was on the agenda. Unfortunately, the change was voted down, with the BOP citing the practice was trying to create a retail pharmacy.

We worked with the BOP staff member to continue educating their members, as this staff member was

certain they could change minds and gain approval. Evaluating our options, we were also prepared to proceed through the legislature as we could no longer wait for BOP action.

Results

In June 2022 the proposed regulation change was again on the BOP's hearing agenda. This time, the regulation change passed unanimously, with the support of the BOP staffer and our detailed testimony. The final step was seeking Legislative Commission approval, which was accomplished a few weeks later.

This achievement is a perfect example of persistence and determination, and it demonstrates the importance of practice engagement, collaborative strategic planning and ongoing advocacy.

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