
New Mexico Cancer Services Survey

Executive Summary

Cancer Services of New Mexico conducted the New Mexico Cancer Services Survey to understand gaps in New Mexico's cancer-related services, from the perspective of adult cancer patients/survivors and their loved ones. This study is a follow-up to a similar effort that we conducted in 2002-2004. Our hope is that this report will provide insights that help New Mexico's cancer services providers customize their offerings to better meet the needs of New Mexicans coping with cancer.

Five hundred and thirty-three (533) New Mexicans coping with cancer were surveyed in 19 different oncology clinic locations throughout New Mexico between January, 2010, and January, 2011. Survey respondents included cancer patients/survivors and their loved ones.

Several analyses were conducted to understand the demographic breakdown of respondents and to compare these demographics to those of all New Mexicans coping with cancer. Our respondents represented a wide variety of tumor types, disease stages, geographic locations, ages, levels of insurance coverage, and ethnic/racial groups. A few groups were somewhat over-represented in the study, including breast cancer patients/survivors; leukemia/lymphoma patients/survivors; women; and residents of Northwestern New Mexico. Other groups were somewhat under-represented in the study, including prostate cancer patients/survivors; those diagnosed at age 75 or older; and residents of Eastern New Mexico. Since we observed relatively few differences in responses across different demographic groups we believe the findings reflected in this report provide a good overall representation of the perspectives of New Mexico's cancer patients/survivors and their loved ones.

Analyses were conducted to understand the relative importance of a variety of cancer-related services, to understand respondents' satisfaction with ease of access to, and quality of, each of these services, and to uncover gaps between respondents' importance ratings and satisfaction ratings for each service. Additional analyses were conducted to understand how patients/survivors and their loved ones get information on managing the disease process, and on how satisfied they are with communication/coordination between their cancer care providers. Highlights of our findings include:

- **Medically-oriented services** (traditional medical treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery; early detection/screening services) **were the most important services to respondents**, followed by informational/educational services (information regarding cancer-related services in New Mexico; education on managing the cancer process), and pain management/palliative care.
- Respondents were quite satisfied with ease of access and service quality for the two services rated as most important - traditional medical treatments and early detection/screening. However, **there is substantial opportunity to improve New Mexicans' experiences** with several other cancer-related services.
 - Services where respondents indicated the **lowest satisfaction with ease of access** included: financial assistance for non-medical expenses; assistance with legal issues; transportation services to/from medical appointments;

complementary/alternative therapies; and emotional support programs for caregivers/family members

- Services where respondents indicated the **lowest satisfaction with service quality** included: assistance with legal issues; financial assistance for non-medical expenses; complementary/alternative therapies; transportation services to/from medical appointments; and in-home care
- For each of the seventeen cancer-related services evaluated, respondents indicated a gap between the importance of the service and their satisfaction with both ease of access to the service and the quality of the service. **Services with the largest gaps may indicate the greatest opportunities for improvement.** These include financial assistance for medical and non-medical expenses; transportation services to/from medical appointments; assistance with legal issues; emotional support programs for caregivers/family members; and information regarding cancer-related services in New Mexico.
- It appears that **patients/survivors and their loved ones are having more difficulty accessing needed services now than they did during our earlier study.** In the 2002-2004 study, 56% of respondents indicated that they did not have difficulty accessing services that they needed. In the current study, only 39% indicated that they did not have difficulty accessing needed services.
- There appear to be substantial **opportunities to improve the way information is disseminated about New Mexico's existing cancer-related services.** Nearly 40% of respondents indicated they were unable to access needed services because they did not know that services were available. Respondents indicated that nurses and physicians were the most helpful sources for providing information on what cancer-related services were available to assist them.
- Over 80% of **respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of communication/coordination between their different medical providers** (oncologists, surgeons, primary care providers, etc.). Areas for improvement included coordination between oncologists and primary care providers, and between oncologists and surgeons.
- There are **opportunities to refine service offerings to better meet the needs of specific underserved groups.** For example, patients aged 75 and over reported more challenges related to transportation to/from medical appointments than other respondents, and Southern New Mexicans reported a bigger gap in emotional support services than those in other parts of the state.

This report is being distributed to cancer services providers throughout New Mexico, in the hope that our findings will provide some guidance regarding how they might continue to improve the services offered to New Mexicans coping with cancer. It will also serve as a major input to Cancer Services of New Mexico's strategic planning process, to ensure our programs and services continue to be focused on the areas of greatest need.

There are many additional ways that we could mine the data in our survey database, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other groups to help them answer specific questions not covered in this report. Please contact us at (505) 259-9583 or info@CancerServicesNM.org if you are interested in learning more.