



COMPREHENSIVE
CANCER CENTER

Assessment of Nutrition Services Available in New Mexico Outpatient Cancer Facilities



Cristian Soto^{1,2,3}; Ellen Burgess MPH¹; Karen Quezada¹; Dolores D. Guest PhD, RD^{1,4}

¹University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center, ²University of New Mexico Undergraduate Pipeline Network, ³Cancer Research – Scholarship & Training in Population Sciences, ⁴Department of Internal Medicine, University of New Mexico

Programmatic Aims and Objective

Evaluating Nutrition Services in Outpatient Cancer Centers in New Mexico (ENS OCC) Program:

- Aims to improve access to nutrition care for ambulatory oncology patients across New Mexico (NM) by comprehensively identifying present deficits in nutrition access.
- Sub-analysis aims to characterize, from a patient's perspective, the availability of nutrition services offered by outpatient cancer facilities (OCF) throughout NM according to their respective websites.

Background and Significance

Access to nutrition services improves oncology patients' clinical outcomes, resulting in better quality of life (QoL) and cancer survivorship.

- 80% of cancer patients estimated to experience malnutrition at some point during the course of their treatment.
- National survey of 124 cancer centers showed that there was 1 registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) for every 2,308 patients.
- The majority of all cancer patients (up to 90%) receive treatment in the outpatient setting. Many patients are not aware of available services if they do not receive direct referrals.
- Attaining adequate nutrition care for patients is challenging as there is currently no standardized way to enforce nutrition guidelines in the outpatient setting compared to inpatient facilities.

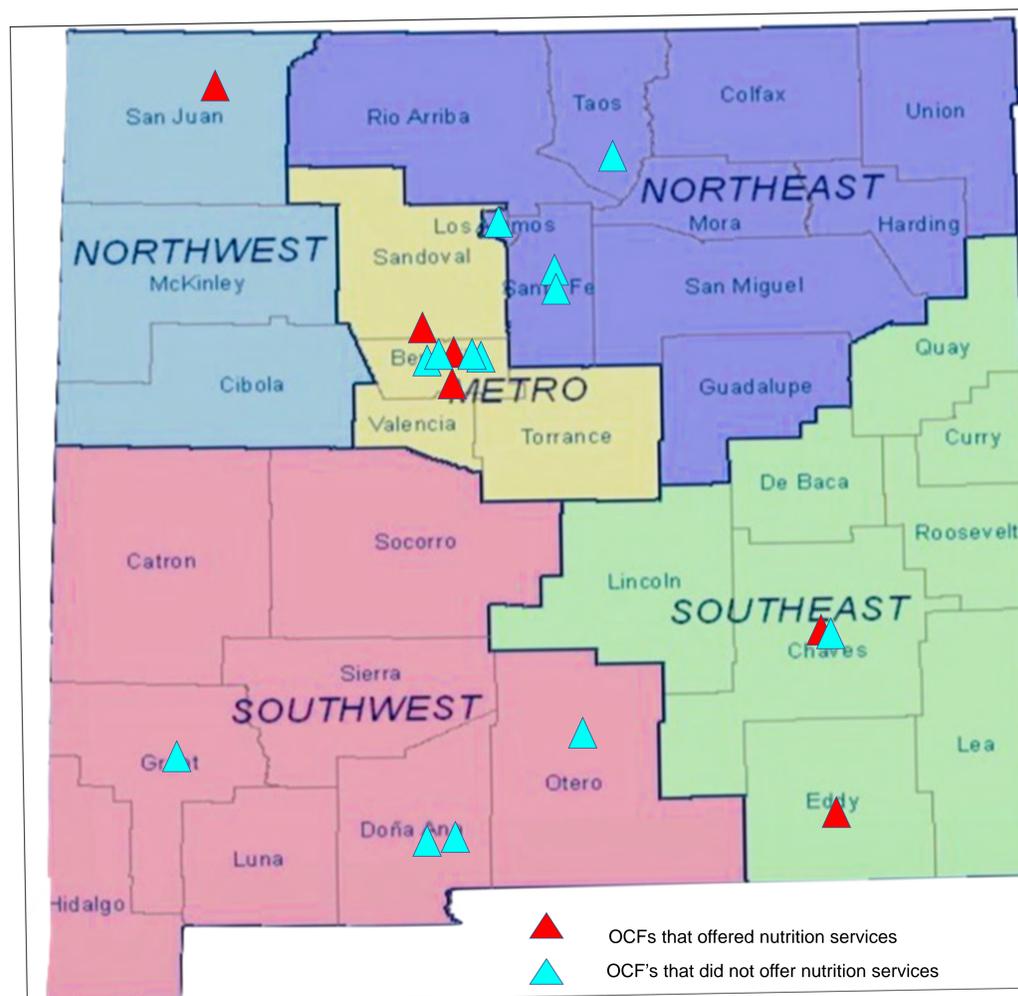
Methods

- Conducted a descriptive analysis utilizing data collected by searching specific terms on publicly available OCF websites to understand what nutrition services are discoverable by a typical patient.
- Utilized a list of 20 facilities where tumors were diagnosed in NM ranked by patient volume, and the 2021 NM Cancer Council Directory.
- Filtered the lists of facilities based on whether or not they treat patients in an outpatient setting and eliminated any duplicates, resulting in my sample size of 19.
- Maintained search terms, dates, findings and verification in an Excel database.

Results

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis of Outpatient New Mexico Cancer Facilities (OCF) by Region, n = 19

Public Health Region	Number of OCF by Region	Number of OCF with Nutrition Services	Nutrition Services Offered
Northwest	1 (5.3%)	1 (100%)	Outpatient medical nutrition therapy
Northeast	4 (21.1%)	0 (0%)	N/A
Southwest	4 (21.1%)	0 (0%)	N/A
Southeast	3 (15.8%)	2 (66.7%)	Dietary counseling, Nutritional services (Dietitian)
Metro	7 (36.8%)	3 (42.9%)	Nutrition counseling services, Oncology nutritionist, Nutrition and Food Services (NFS)



Source: https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/view/image/_RegionLabels.pngHealthRegions2012

- **13 of 19 OCF websites (68.4%) do not offer/advertise nutrition services.**
- **If oncology patients do not reside close to an OCF offering nutritional services, total distance travelled to obtain adequate nutritional care could be substantial.**

Discussion

- These findings support the growing body of scientific literature that there is a gap in oncology nutrition; specifically, that the availability of malnutrition screening, diet intervention and counseling services for oncology patients are significantly limited across NM.
- Finding information regarding nutrition services on the six OCF websites with nutritional services was straightforward. The remaining 13 OCF websites were vague or difficult to navigate. I understand that some OCFs might offer nutrition services that were not listed; however, their websites do not present this information.
- The lack of available information presented by OCF websites may inhibit the confidence of NM residents to navigate the websites and acquire adequate attention for their nutritional health.

Conclusion and Future Steps

Given the importance of nutrition in oncology, my next steps could be interviewing cancer patients on their experiences accessing nutrition care during and after their treatment to determine what additional barriers exist for patients trying to receive adequate nutrition care in NM.

Acknowledgements



University of New Mexico Undergraduate Pipeline Network (UPN) and Cancer Research – Scholarship & Training in Population Sciences (C-STEPS)

ENS OCC-NM is funded by ACS-IRG, Principal Investigator Dolores Guest, PhD, RD.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Angela Meisner, MPH, from the New Mexico Tumor Registry (NMTR) for the development of this project.

References

1. Trujillo EB, Claghorn K, Dixon SW, et al. Inadequate Nutrition Coverage in Outpatient Cancer Centers: Results of a National Survey. *Journal of Oncology*. 2019;2019:1-8. doi:10.1155/2019/7462940
2. Food and Nutrition Board; Health and Medicine Division; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Examining Access to Nutrition Care in Outpatient Cancer Centers: Proceedings of a Workshop*. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); August 26, 2016.
3. Bozzetti F, Mariani L, Lo Vullo S, et al. The nutritional risk in oncology: a study of 1,453 cancer outpatients [published correction appears in *Support Care Cancer*. 2012 Aug;20(8):1929. Capuano, Giovanni [corrected to Capuano, Giorgio]]. *Support Care Cancer*. 2012;20(8):1919-1928. doi:10.1007/s00520-012-1387-x
4. Platek ME, Johnson J, Woolf K, Makarem N, Ompad DC. Availability of Outpatient Clinical Nutrition Services for Patients With Cancer Undergoing Treatment at Comprehensive Cancer Centers. *J Oncol Pract*. 2015;11(1):1-5. doi:10.1200/JOP.2013.001134