



Rural Americans Face Greater Challenges In Accessing Cancer Care, According To New National Survey

(NAPSA)—Nearly double the number of Americans in rural areas versus nonrural areas reported having an insufficient number of cancer doctors near where they live. This is one of the many findings from the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)'s second annual National Cancer Opinion Survey, which was conducted online by The Harris Poll.

According to the survey, rural Americans are the most concerned about the availability of cancer care near where they live:

- Four in 10 rural Americans who have or had cancer say there aren't enough doctors specializing in cancer care near their home, compared to 22 percent of urban and suburban patients.
- Rural patients spend an average of 50 minutes traveling one way to see their cancer doctor, versus 30 minutes for nonrural patients.
- Thirty-six percent of patients in rural areas say they had to travel too far to see the doctor managing their cancer care versus 19 percent of nonrural patients.

"The unfortunate reality is that rural Americans routinely have to travel long distances for cancer care, which can lead to dangerous delays in their diagnosis and treatment," said ASCO President Monica Bertagnolli, M.D., FACS, FASCO. "As a result, rural counties have higher death rates from many common cancers than urban areas. Our health care system needs to address these disparities so that every patient, no matter where he or she lives, can access high-quality cancer care."

The survey also found that Americans from all parts of the country are worried about the cost of cancer care. If faced with a cancer diagnosis, 57 percent of Americans say they would be most concerned about the financial impact on their families or about paying for treatment, compared to 54 percent, each, who say they would be most concerned about dying or about cancer-related pain and suffering.

Even more than patients, family caregivers bear the brunt of the high cost of cancer treatment:

- Among caregivers responsible for paying for cancer care, nearly three in four (74 percent) say they're concerned about affording it.



Survey shows Americans worry about the cost and the availability of cancer care.

- More than six in 10 caregivers (61 percent) say they or another relative has taken an extreme step to help pay for their loved one's care, including working extra hours (23 percent), postponing retirement (14 percent), taking on an additional job (13 percent) or selling family heirlooms (9 percent).

"Patients are right to be concerned about the financial impact of a cancer diagnosis on their families," said ASCO Chief Medical Officer Richard L. Schilsky, M.D., FACP, FASCO. "It's clear that high treatment costs are taking a serious toll not only on patients, but also on the people who care for them. If a family member has been diagnosed with cancer, the sole focus should be on helping him or her get well. Instead, Americans are worrying about affording treatment, and in many cases, they're making serious personal sacrifices to help pay for their loved ones' care."

Despite challenges accessing cancer care due to cost and travel time, the overwhelming majority of Americans are happy with the cancer care they have received: Nearly nine in 10 people with cancer believe they have gotten high-quality care and are satisfied with the quality of the doctors who specialize in cancer care near where they live (88–89 percent).

The national survey, commissioned by ASCO, was conducted online by The Harris Poll from July 10–August 10, 2017 among 4,887 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. Of these adults, 1,001 have or had cancer.

Further information is available at www.asco.org; use search term "National Cancer Opinion Survey."