

ASCO QOPI Certification, Why, When and for Whom. Medisprof Cluj-Romania Experience

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Background

The number of international practices certified in providing high-quality cancer care based on severe ethics established by ASCO is growing. As stated by ASCO (American Society of Clinical Oncology) "QOPI® is a practice-based system of quality self-assessment operated by ASCO with the goals of improving cancer care and prevention. It promotes excellence in cancer care by helping practices to create a culture of self-examination and improvement". The Medisprof Cancer Center in Romania has been included among other six other practices in Brazil, Greece, and Spain in achieving ASCO's Quality Oncology Practice Initiative (QOPI®) Certification. Medisprof cancer center administration, located in Cluj, Romania, which is an outpatient hematology-oncology practice was seeking from its opening in 2010 the ASCO standards as a proof of interest in quality of the services offered to the patients. We choose this certification because it is more adapted then others to oncology. Also, answering the demand from practices outside the United States, ASCO expanded QOPI participation to international partners, growing ASCO's global quality impact. The ASCO opened this possibility worldwide in 2016. ASCO purposes to increase the number of QOPI participants and QOPI-Certified practices worldwide in association with its goal to grow and exchange perceptible and reproducible quality of cancer care delivery on a worldwide scale.

Methods

The process employed for the certification includes procedures and policies in the 22 ASCO QOPI standards (as per 2016). It can be availed by applying online through the QOPI web portal and consists of a six step application which involves, eligibility, agreements, QCP questionnaire, payment, pre-survey documents, and onsite availability. It is a voluntary self-assessment program that aids cancer practices to evaluate and improve the quality of the care they offer to patients. It refers to creation of a safe environment with oncology staff trainings like nurses, pharmacists, secretaries, psychologists. Oncologists and proper documentation by the team of their activities which include treatment planning, patient consent, and education. Oncology pharmacy manipulation of hazardous drugs involving ordering, preparing, dispensing, and administering chemotherapy. Comprehensive information for the patients including informed consent and disease management on long term. Policies to ensure patient emergencies are managed accordingly, observation after chemotherapy is given, including adherence, toxicity, and complications faced by the patient, etc. It is required to schedule an international survey three months before the survey. The onsite survey will involve various evaluations like, review of policies and records, interview of the staffs, and observation of the practiced procedures. Medisprof pursued an apparatus to reorganize its oncology procedures and policies in a new comprehensive cancer center and in its search for a certification program found ASCO QOPI Certification to be more appropriate than other certification programs to meet the medical oncology needs. The QOPI Certification

Program (QCP) offers a 3-year certification to oncology practices that identifies exemplary obligation to safety and quality in oncology patient care and is presently available to practices in countries within the European Union, and other countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Results

Between 2016 -2018 we had to adapt our procedures and policies to align them to QOPI® requirements. Motivation of the team was one of the most important tasks for the administration to achieve these goals. The working team included the "sponsor", an oncologist, a nurse, pharmacist, psychologist, secretary, an auditor, and a data manager. Although it was difficult to encourage the team to adapt to changes necessary by trainings and documentation of their work, we organized training courses of the staff: pharmacists, nurses, secretaries, psychologists, and doctors. The first training for nurses was done during two months in 2018. It was adapted to local needs for nurses, after the American ONS (Oncology Nursing Society) training. As we have two pharmacists certificated by ESOP (European Society of Oncology Pharmacy) they did one of the most important part of the trainings looking to oncology drugs manipulation and administration standards. After having successfully passed the medical files abstraction we realized that we will not be able to maintain the certification without a proper electronic medical record (EMR). With the data manager we built an electronic medical record in Romanian where all the staff has now his page to document the activity according to the standards. Information given to the patients was now more comprehensive, including modified informed consent and disease management information. Oral medications patients were given a journal at home to be completed, in order to verify compliance and safety. Laminar flow hood systems and equipment for oncology pharmacy as well as for treatment rooms was updated.

Conclusions

Medisprof Cancer Center was certified in August 2018 with QOPI® ASCO certification. Re-certification is now on the way, and progress done by having the QOPI standards can now be measured. Next step will be ASTRO-QOPI certification for Radiotherapy department. We are also, now closely working with ASCO QTP (Quality training program) team in order to further improve the quality of our services with improve in design, implementation, and success in the practice settings. It enables us to empower practice teams to enhance clinical care and operational performance and teach the teams how to stabilize quality upgrading projects with demanding schedules and competing priorities. The certification has helped in building our reputation as a quality oncology practice, accessing quality and safety standards specific to the outpatient oncology setting, identifying areas of improvement and improve communication between physicians and nurses, describing why quality improvement is important for clinicians, identifying techniques and tools used in quality improvement, identifying relevant metrics and structuring a quality improvement project.

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