November 10, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The leaders of APSHO, the Advanced Practitioner Society for Hematology and Oncology, believe that the public perception generated by the American Medical Association’s (AMA) recent #StopScopeCreep campaign this past weekend, and the disparaging and offensive social media posts that followed, jeopardizes accessible, quality cancer care. The AMA narrative leads one to believe that care given by advanced practitioners (APs) is not safe care, and that APs believe that “patient safety is a game.” You will find a copy of our letter of response to the AMA attached. We are requesting your public support of APs as safe, effective, and essential members of the interdisciplinary health care team.

We know that oncology APs (pharmacists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists) are an integral part of the oncology care team. APs practicing at the full scope of their license increase quality patient care and patient care capacity (Bruinooge et al., 2018; Ignoffo et al., 2016).

There is an abundance of scholarly research that shows the safety of AP practice and favorably compares to physician practice in many specialty areas outside of oncology (Johnson et al., 2019; Kurtzman & Barnow, 2017; Martin et al., 2020; McCleery et al., 2011; Patio et al., 2018; Rymer et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2018). A 2016 national study of Medicare beneficiaries noted that the cost of care provided by nurse practitioners was significantly lower than the cost of physician-provided care (Perloff et al., 2016). In fact, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and many states demonstrated full confidence in and dependence of APs in improving access to safe and effective care during the COVID-19 pandemic by lifting outdated scope of practice restrictions (AANP, 2020; AAPA, 2020, American Pharmacists Association, 2020). We recently submitted a letter to CMS requesting that these changes be made permanent to continue this improved access to care. In contrast, the ”key research & resources” listed on AMA’s own #StopScopeCreep Campaign page is not published, interdependent, or peer-reviewed research allowing for objective analysis.

As you are aware, the patients we serve are faced with the stress and complexity of living with a cancer diagnosis and are best served by an interdisciplinary approach to care. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to this stress but has also emphasized the essential role of the AP in improving access to quality patient care. Divisive tactics, including propagating unfounded information, can only increase barriers to accessing health care. APSHO believes that efficient, safe, and accessible care delivery occurs when APs, physicians, and other healthcare
professionals work together to provide quality care tailored to the needs of the patient, with each clinician practicing to the top of their license, education, and clinical competence.

You will be seeing APSHO’s positive campaign on social media and the APSHO website soon with the tagline: #APCareSafeCare. We will be emphasizing collaboration, scope of practice, and the value APs bring to the oncology team. **We ask that you support your oncology AP colleagues** in this campaign by reaching out to your own membership and in your social media as well. Together, we can strengthen our healthcare system, increase the public’s trust, and provide our nation with quality care.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sandra Kurtin, PhD, ANP-C, AOCN
President, Board of Directors
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