



New Mexico Cancer Services Survey

Executive Summary

The New Mexico Cancer Services Survey is the first statewide effort to understand gaps in New Mexico's cancer-related services, from the perspective of adult cancer patients/survivors and their loved ones. Findings from this study will assist cancer services providers across the state in better customizing their offerings to meet the needs of New Mexicans coping with cancer.

The survey was conducted in two phases. During Phase I, we distributed a survey questionnaire to 3,200 people in People Living Through Cancer's mailing list. The major advantage of using PLTC's database was that we had immediate access to a large population of New Mexican cancer patients/survivors and their loved ones. The disadvantage is that we knew our Phase I results would not be statistically representative of the entire New Mexican population coping with cancer. During Phase II, we ensured a more representative sample by working with oncology groups and other cancer services providers across the state to distribute surveys to patient populations that were not sufficiently represented during Phase I.

A total of 888 questionnaires were completed and returned during this program. For analysis purposes, we opted to focus on the subset of respondents that we believed would provide the most relevant information for guiding efforts to improve future cancer-related services in New Mexico – specifically, the 471 respondents who described the experiences of patients/survivors who had been diagnosed since 2000 and had lived in New Mexico during treatment.

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: ethnic/racial groups other than non-Hispanic whites; breast cancer patients/survivors; women; and younger patients/survivors.

Statistical analyses were conducted to understand the relative importance of a variety of cancer-related services, to understand respondents' satisfaction with 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 and their loved ones get information on managing the disease process. Highlights of our findings include:

- Medically-oriented services (early detection/screening services, traditional medical treatments) were the most important services to respondents, followed by assistance with paperwork/reimbursement for treatment costs; emotional services (support programs for patients and caregivers), and day-to-day assistance services (hospice/end-of-life services, training in day-to-day management skills, in-home care, and transportation services to/from appointments). Housing/lodging services and alternative/integrative therapies were less important to respondents.

•
•
•
•
•
•

-
- There is substantial opportunity to improve New Mexicans' experiences with cancer-related services. The average satisfaction rating was below "satisfied" for five of eleven services evaluated: emotional support programs for caregivers; alternative/integrative therapies; emotional support programs for patients; transportation services to/from medical appointments; and training in day-to-day management skills. Respondents were most satisfied with traditional medical treatments (e.g., radiation, chemotherapy).
 - For each of the eleven cancer-related services evaluated, respondents indicated a gap between the importance of the service and their satisfaction with the service. Services with the largest gaps may indicate the greatest opportunities for improvement. These include transportation services to/from appointments; emotional support programs for caregivers; emotional support programs for patients; early detection/screening services; training in day-to-day management skills; and assistance with paperwork/reimbursement for treatment costs.
 - There appear to be substantial opportunities to improve the way information is disseminated about New Mexico's existing cancer-related services. Over 30% of respondents indicated they were unable to access needed services because they were not aware that services were available.
 - In open-ended comments regarding cancer-related services that didn't exist to support respondents and/or services they would focus on improving, respondents were most concerned about a lack of information and education to help them manage the cancer journey. Concerns cited inadequate information on the disease process and treatment options, along with insufficient information on what cancer-related services are available to assist patients and their loved ones. Gaps in emotional support services for patients and caregivers came a close second. These areas are potential targets for significant improvement.
 - There are opportunities to refine service offerings to better meet the needs of different patient demographic groups. For example, non-Hispanic white respondents reported a significantly smaller gap for emotional support programs for patients than other respondents did, suggesting that future efforts to expand these types of programs should particularly focus on other ethnic/racial groups.

This report is being distributed to cancer services providers throughout New Mexico, in the hope that our findings will provide some guidance for 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.