

Cancer in the United States

Unit: System Outlook

University

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Introduction

According to Smith et al, 2015, cancer is a disease that results from abnormal cells which divide uncontrollably leading to the destruction of body tissues. These abnormal cells are also known as malignant cells, tumor cells or cancer cells. These cells are usually characterized by abnormal nuclear morphology, pleomorphism, loss of polarity, giant tumor cells, ischemic necrosis and atypical mitoses. The disease has the potential to spread and invade other parts of the human body thereby infiltrating normal tissues in the body. This counterpoints with benign tumors which do not spread to other regions of the body (Davies & Welch, 2014).

Cancer has a massive impact on the American society in the United States as other regions across the world. The American cancer society estimates that the number of new cases on of cancer and mortality expected each year to determine the contemporary burden of cancer. Currently, the figure available for cancer mortality and incidence lags three to four year being those of the current year. The figures and facts that are regularly updated by the American cancer society annual publication present the most recent trends in cancer survival and occurrence as well as the information on early detection, prevention, symptoms, and treatment (Siegel, Miller, & Jemal, 2016).

Health care policies

Several laws have been passed in the United States Congress that address issues related to cancer as a disease. These public policies adopted by the federal government have provided a system for legislative action, regulatory decisions and funding priorities. The most notable

examples are the affordable care act also known as Obama care and the federal program on cancer prevention and detection. The affordable care act allows millions of Americans to subscribe to medical care coverage. People who have cancer can purchase health insurance via online exchanges referred to as marketplaces. The exchanges allow peoples to compare available plans by pharmaceutical coverage, provider participation, benefits, and price. The act requires that the plans cover essential benefits like follow-up care and cancer treatment. The plan must also cover preventive services and checkups, for instance, screening mammograms and colonoscopies and there are to be no deductible costs and copayments. However, if a patient has a history of cancer, one will have to meet the cost of these tests as they will be regarded as diagnostic (Smith et al, 2015). The law made it mandatory for all US resident to have health insurance by January 2014, failure to which one was forced to pay a tax` penalty (fee). Young individuals were permitted to benefit from their parent insurance until the age of 26. This is important particularly for families with young cancer patients. The act prohibited insurance companies from denying coverage to cancer patient based on their medical history or charge those with preexisting health conditions more. Cancer patients can no longer lose their coverage or have annual or lifetime limits on their converge by their sickness. Apart from these, firms are required to give more details concerning their medical care plans. The medical plans placed on the exchanges limited deductibles and out-of-pocket costs for patients. The law also established new rights and rules that make it easy for patients to appeal insurance claims that have been denied. This bill majorly addresses issues related to the management aspect of cancer.

On the other hand, the federal programs on cancer prevention and detection aim to reduce the burden of cancer in the United States through a variety of interventions. The opportunities created by these program span several areas of the American society. These include educational

institutions, healthcare providers, social services agencies, consumer groups, labor organizations, employers and consumer groups (Siegel, Miller, & Jemal, 2016). The federal program that supports cancer prevention address five key important areas. These include information dissemination about cancer; provisions and payment for cancer services; surveillance and monitoring of cancer-based health indicators; the facilitation of national program evaluation and planning; and guideline development and national objectives. These federal programs have facilitated the enactment of several laws the aim to reduce d the exposure of American to risk factor of cancer such as the occupational health act, the radiation protection act, and the 21st-century cure. The 21st-century cure act signed by President Obama into law in December 2016 created a fund that facilitates innovation and research in areas of cancer management. The main purpose of these funding is to support research on cancer like the development of vaccines, immunotherapy, development of a diagnostic test for cancer that will be more sensitive, and combination therapies (Davies & Welch, 2014). These researchers aim to address the major challenges that are related to cancer.

Impact of cancer on the U.S. population and healthcare system

According to the American cancer society, in 2017 alone, about 1.7 million Americans were diagnosed with, and more than 600000 died from the disease. 30% of these deaths were due to cigarette smoking only. Physical inactivity, excess weight, alcohol, and poor nutrition led to 20% of the diagnoses. The healthcare outcomes related to cancer and other illnesses in America are inferior to other developed countries in Europe which have lower per capita GDP figures. The financial cost arising from cancer are high both for the society and the individual. According to AHRQ (agency from healthcare research and quality), the direct medical expenses in 2015 for cancer were 80.2 billion dollars. 52% of which covered outpatient care and the rest inpatient

management of these patients. This has contributed significantly to the rising cost of healthcare in the US as prices rise. Healthcare contributed over 17% of the American GDP. This is projected to rise to over 25% of the overall GDP (Siegel, Miller, & Jemal, 2016). The growth is unsustainable as it endangers the overall health of the American economy.

The rise of the cancer epidemic in the US has brought immense suffering to the society. Many households are currently forced to spend a huge chunk of their income in the care of their sick loved ones. It is estimated that households in America spend over 2.5 times more of the medical bill than on food. The psychological burden placed on the member of the community as they watch their loved ones suffering from the disease is unmeasurable (Davies & Welch, 2014). The reduction of barriers to the care of cancer patients is critical in the elimination of death and suffering from the disease.

The US healthcare system is unable to care for the huge increase in the number of cancer case each year. These cancer patient are increasingly taking up a larger chunk of the total bed occupancy in the United States something the health infrastructure available was not prepared to address. There is thus need to create more cancer treatment centers and to train more specialists in oncology to cater for the increasing number of cases.

Federal Strategies place to educate and promote prevention of cancer

There are several strategies that have been placed by the federal government to help deal with the problem of cancer which is rising to epidemic proportions. The government through agencies such as the food safety and inspection service help regulate the food industry to ensure that food consumed in the US does not contain a carcinogen. Other agencies such as the environmental protection agency and occupational health safety work together to ensure that

Americans are not exposed to carcinogens from the environment or at the place of work (Siegel, Miller, & Jemal, 2016).

The government runs a medical campaign aimed at educating the population about the risk factors for different cancers. This aims to stimulate lifestyle change in the population such as the need to stop alcohol consumption, the importance of physical activity and the need to eat healthy meals (Siegel, Miller, & Jemal, 2016). The government requires all cigarette packages to be a common and warning message that cigarette is harmful to one's health. The government has ensured that health education in schools that is mandatory contains information on cancer. These educational initiatives aim to target children all the way from when still in school to adulthood (Siegel, Miller, & Jemal, 2018). Cancer screening program has been rolled out and funded by the federal government to help in the timely detection of cancer cases for early intervention.

Challenges and progress to date that has been made in preventing and reducing health risks associated with the disease

Despite the enormous resources, the government has spent in the past decade to reduce the number of cancer cases through prevention strategies, the incidence of cancer in the US is rising. The major challenges in this war against cancer are the late presentation of cases (Davies & Welch, 2014). The most intervention comes when the risk is already too high or when preneoplastic lesions with irreversible cellular changes are apparent. When the primary intervention strategies fail, there is the need to for secondary prevention aimed at slowing the process which may end up being unsuccessful. Tertiary prevention measures are non-reassuring. Despite the challenges, a great strike has been made in the management of cancer as a disease. New treatment modalities of cancer such as brachytherapy have been discovered and a newer antineoplastic agent that is more potent and with fewer adverse effects (Rahib et al, 2014). When

used as chemopreventive agents, they help manage early stages of cancer well preventing progress to full-blown cancer. Precancerous lesions are routinely removed as a precautionary measure in hospitals.

Strategies to increase awareness, prevention, and education of cancer

To increase awareness about cancer, there is need to carry out media campaign. These can highlight can touch on the rising case of cancer, the risk factors and ways that one can prevent the condition. Health experts should be invited to educate the public on the different types of cancers affecting the population. If possible, the media should highlight the plight of those suffering from the condition (Petrick et al, 2016). The school curriculum should also have elements of Health education touching cancer.

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