



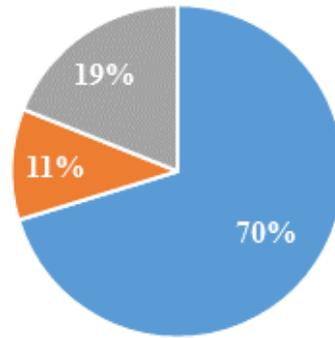
### **Communication between Primary Care Physicians and Oncologists**

Last month's ACORN *Clinical and Policy Perspective* asked practices to tell us about how primary care physicians and oncologists communicate with one another when caring for cancer patients. A total of 37/364 (10%) responses were received from 17 different practices. Below is a summary of the findings.

Nearly all of the responses came from physicians:

- Physicians (MD, DO) **84%**
- Advanced Practice Providers (PA, NP) **5%**
- Practice/Office Manager **8%**
- Nurses **3%**

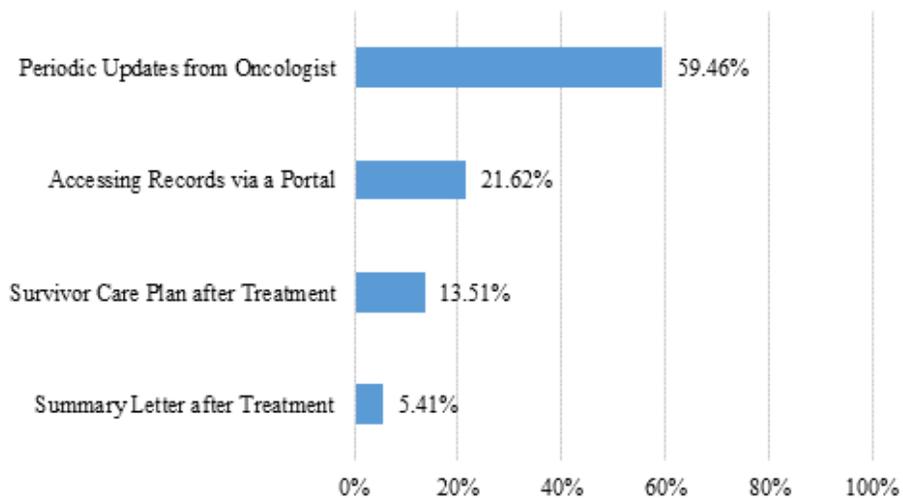
Only 19% of respondents were **completely satisfied** with how well oncologists communicated while managing a patient's care. The majority (81%) were either **somewhat** or **not at all satisfied**.



■ Somewhat Satisfied ■ Not at all Satisfied ■ Completely Satisfied

However, there was nearly universal agreement (**97%**) that electronic communication with oncologists, such as notes from the EMR and ability to email questions, would help care for patients better.

When respondents were asked to indicate the most valuable form of communication with oncologists regarding a patient’s cancer status, **periodic updates** throughout treatment was the preferred choice (**59%**).



Respondents provided their suggestions to improve communication with oncologists. Some responses reiterated their preferred form of communication. Others provided additional comments:

*“I would like info on prognosis, how long the patient would be expected to live...My experience is that the oncologist never discusses with my patients their prognosis for cure or end of life issues.”*

*“The oncologist’s office should call the PCP’s office and find the preferred method of communication, then use it.”*

*“Having a summary that isn't regurgitated from an EMR set of checked boxes that is impossible to read.”*

## **Conclusions**

Providers are not satisfied with the quantity and quality of communication delivered by oncologists.

There is hope that electronic communication can contribute to better patient care, but lack of standardized communication procedures necessitates that providers and oncologists consult one another to determine preferred communication methods. Oncologist updates, survivor care plans and records/notes all have the capability to be incorporated into EMRs or patient portals, which can make the process more streamlined and possibly contribute to better patient outcomes.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. We like hearing from our ACORN partners!

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