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The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network of Hospitals at the Forefront of Testing New Nationwide Data Reporting System

New Brunswick, N.J., July 27, 2009 – What if the quality of cancer care could be assessed and improved in “real clinical time” instead of waiting the typical two years it takes for clinical data to be analyzed and changes implemented? That is an opportunity The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ) Network of hospitals is exploring this summer, as it takes the lead in a national initiative to improve data collection on cancer treatment and create a new quality assessment system that can be utilized by health providers across the country. The CINJ Network of hospitals represents nearly a quarter of the 60 beta test sites from across the country that have been invited to help steer the effort. CINJ is a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

According to the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC), which is overseeing the project, “treatment information in current data collection systems is insufficient to assess the quality of (cancer) care.” That reality is among the reasons why the CoC developed the Rapid Quality Reporting System (RQRS), which the CINJ Network and others will be pilot testing for the remainder of this year.

The first phase, which tested the mechanics of the web-based data collection system, took place during the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009. Modifications based on that testing will be put into practice for this next phase, utilizing existing national 2006 and 2007 data on breast and colorectal cancers. This information will be used as a baseline against which the CoC and participating hospitals can monitor future performance rates. The CINJ Network will be responsible for entering 2008 and 2009 breast and colorectal data from patients at its respective hospitals.

The goal of the RQRS is to provide hospitals and other healthcare providers at the local level with performance feedback on specific patients. One of the ways this will be accomplished is through the RQRS “alert system.” Healthcare professionals will receive real time performance feedback through e-mail alerts as well as through the system itself. One example would be if a woman had a lumpectomy for early stage breast cancer. The usual standard of care would be for her also to receive radiation to the breast. RQRS monitors her case information and notifies the treating hospital and physician if radiation delivery has not been reported as started within a time frame consistent with evidence-based recommended practice. CoC project coordinators view the RQRS as a unique opportunity to use technology to ensure optimal cancer care.

“Will this take the place of an oncologist or other medical professional? Absolutely not,” noted Molly Gabel, MD, deputy director of extramural affairs at CINJ and associate professor of radiation oncology at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. “What the system is designed to do is provide comprehensive, up-to-date information in real time so that teams of oncologists can have a ‘report card’ on the care their patients are receiving.”

The CINJ Network also will have input into this monitoring process, which Dr. Gabel says positions it as a nationwide leader in this area. “Being that CINJ has a large network of hospitals participating in the pilot, and because we already operate in a manner which promotes uniformity, the leaders at our Network

institutions feel confident that as a group we can help build a quality foundation for the RQRS. We are grateful to the CoC for this opportunity.”

Following completion of the program’s second phase, the CoC will reevaluate the RQRS and make any necessary modifications. Ultimately, the goal is to measure the impact the system will have on promoting the quality of cancer care by assessing performance rate changes at participating hospitals. Through RQRS, local hospitals will be able to compare their performance rates to those of other facilities state and nationwide. It is the hope of the CoC that all of its 1,460 accredited cancer programs across the country will be able to utilize the system by 2011.

Over the last 16 years, CINJ’s Network of hospitals has been instrumental in providing its patients with outstanding cancer programs that emphasize state-of-the-art cancer care through clinical research, prevention and education components across the state. Through affiliation with CINJ, Network hospitals are able to provide access to clinical trials for their patients, available only at NCI-designated cancer centers and their networks. CINJ also provides its Network hospitals with professional education, community education and outreach, and other services that enhance their cancer programs.

About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (www.cinj.org) is the state’s first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer. CINJ’s physician-scientists engage in translational research, transforming their laboratory discoveries into clinical practice, quite literally bringing research to life. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is a center of excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. To support CINJ, please call the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at 1-888-333-CINJ.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network is comprised of hospitals throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important discoveries into the community. Flagship Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Major Clinical Research Affiliate Hospitals: Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Morristown Memorial Hospital, Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Overlook Hospital, and Jersey Shore University Medical Center. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital*, JFK Medical Center, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ at Hamilton), Saint Peter’s University Hospital, Somerset Medical Center, Southern Ocean County Hospital, The University Hospital/UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School*, and University Medical Center at Princeton. *Academic Affiliate

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