

COA Sounds Alarm For Community Oncology Practices Impacted By Change Healthcare Cyberattack

*Requests Immediate Government Action
to Protect Independent Oncology
Practices and the Patients They Serve*

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Ted Okon, COA

[Oncology Alliance \(COA\)](#) is issuing an urgent call to action in response to the recent cyberattack on Change Healthcare that has had a catastrophic impact on the ability of independent, community oncology practices to treat patients. The alarming situation, which has been unaddressed and unresolved for nearly two weeks, needs immediate attention by the federal government. COA is urging swift and decisive government intervention to prevent further harm to the nation's already strained health care system.

Most Americans with cancer are treated at independent community oncology clinics, which are the backbone of the United States' cancer care system. COA is a national, non-profit organization singularly dedicated to advocating for these practices and, most importantly, the patients they serve. Since the hack was discovered, COA has been in [steady communication with member practices](#), industry stakeholders, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the White House, and Congress about the need for an urgent solution.

The Change Healthcare hack has had a severe ongoing impact on cancer practices and their patients. The attack, which targeted a critical IT platform connecting practices, pharmacies, and others with insurance providers, has caused a debilitating disruption in claims processing. The scale of this incident is unprecedented, and its timing could not be worse, as many practices are still grappling with inflation, physician payment cuts, and new 2024 underwater pharmacy reimbursement from pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs). The impact of the hack continues to be unveiled, with practices reporting that it has also impacted benefits verification for patients, prior authorizations, financial assistance programs for patients in need, and more.

"We are witnessing a disaster unfold in real time. The cyberattack on Change Healthcare is not just an inconvenience—it's a direct threat to the livelihood of community oncology practices and the well-being of patients with cancer," said [Ted Okon, executive director of COA](#). "The government must step in immediately with concrete measures to mitigate this crisis impacting both practices and the patients they serve. This is the closest event to a public health emergency we have seen since COVID."

COA emphasizes that the hack has thrown the fragile ecosystem of health care reimbursement into disarray, potentially leading to delayed treatments for patients with cancer.

This is an unacceptable risk that could lead to dire consequences for patient health and practice sustainability. The inability to process claims is choking the cash flow that is the lifeblood of practices, threatening their ability to provide care, pay staff salaries, and maintain operations.

Amid this growing disaster, COA urges the government, and specifically CMS to implement emergency policies that will enable practices to quickly and efficiently navigate around the disruptions caused by the cyberattack. One such measure is the immediate implementation of a temporary waiver allowing health care providers to switch to alternative, known and approved clearinghouses for claim submissions. This process usually takes at least 21 days for the government to process, which is unacceptably long given the current crisis.

"The ripple effect of this cyberattack is vast and devastating. Every day without a resolution tightens the financial stranglehold on practices that are already operating on thin margins," adds Okon. "This is not just about the here and now; it's about preserving a health care system that is accessible and equitable. It's about ensuring that every patient with cancer can receive the care they need, when they need it, without catastrophic delays. The time to act is now!"

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About the Community Oncology Alliance: COA is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for community oncology practices and, most importantly, the patients they serve. COA is the only organization dedicated solely to community oncology where the majority of



Americans with cancer are treated. The mission of COA is to ensure that patients with cancer receive quality, affordable, and accessible cancer care in their own communities. More than 5,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with cancer every day and deaths from the disease have been steadily declining due to earlier detection, diagnosis, and treatment. Learn more at www.CommunityOncology.org. Follow COA on X at www.twitter.com/oncologyCOA or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CommunityOncologyAlliance.

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