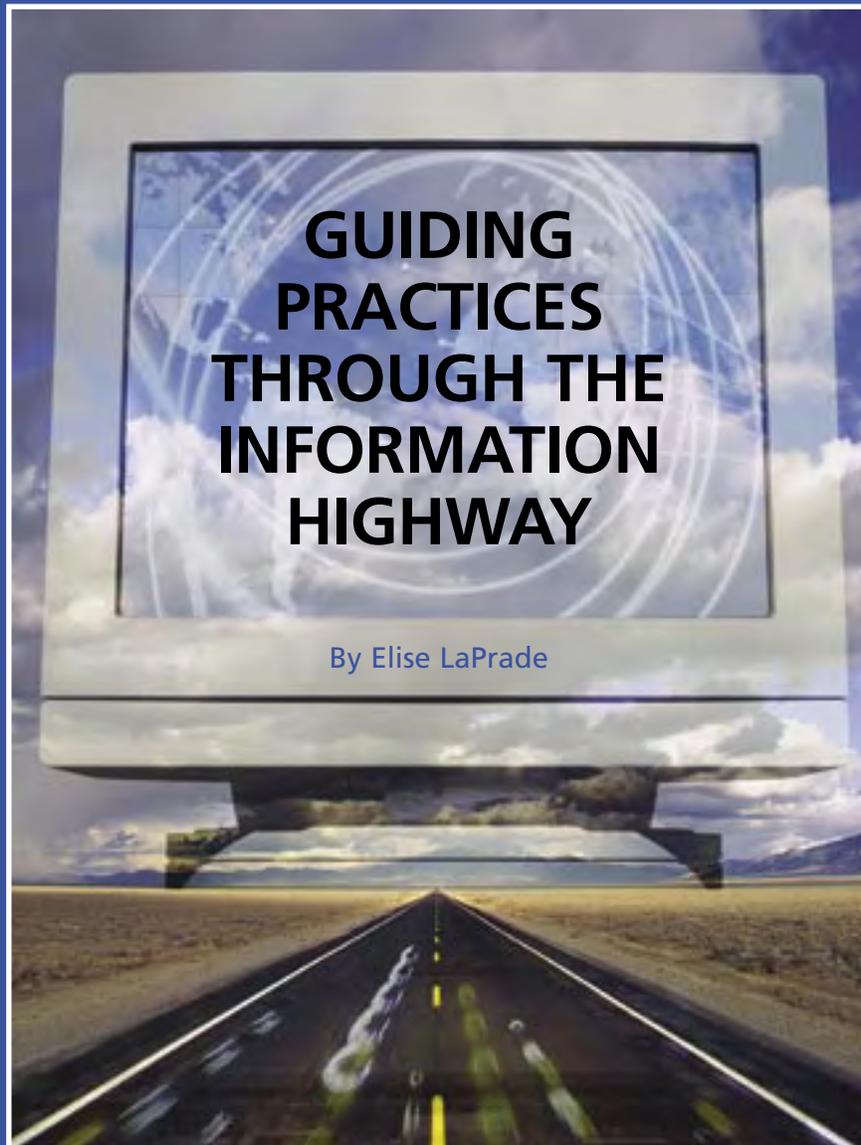


CLICK HERE



WHETHER IN THE FORM OF
self-checkout lines at the local grocery
store, ordering holiday gifts online, or a simple
click on a late-model vehicle's dashboard to launch its
navigation system, technology touches every facet of our lives.

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, we have seen tremendous technological advances within the health care arena as well. Pharmaceutical bar coding, e-prescribing, and computerized order entry are quickly becoming staples of medical practices. A 2004 survey of 1,600 members of the American College of Physician Executives identified that nearly a quarter of those polled utilized wireless portable devices in their practices.¹ And, as we see more changes in legislation, we may also expect to see a continued impact on the technological aspects of patient care as well. In fact, in an effort to enhance the continuum of care and to cut administrative costs within health care centers in the coming years, President Bush has mandated the implementation of electronic medical records (EMR) for all patients by 2014.²

Today's world of information is quite literally at everyone's fingertips through a simple click of a mouse or keyboard stroke. Many physicians share the same experiences: patients arrive at their scheduled appointment armed with an overflowing folder of articles related to their specific illness, downloaded from Internet giants such as WebMD and Medscape.

According to the July 2004 U.S. Census report, approximately 117 million Americans use the Internet to locate medical information. As a follow-up to these findings, a Harris Poll of 1,015 adults showed that 89 percent of Internet users considered their health-based Internet searches as "successful".³ While these resources have encouraged patient empowerment in the treatment of their ailments, the scope of the patient/physician relationship has changed due to the impact of Web-based information. Caregivers must now be prepared to account for the validity and accuracy of information obtained through patients' online searches.

With the amount of online resources readily available to patients, where can physicians—specifically community-based oncologists—access information that is relevant to their practice? International Oncology Network's (ION) Web site, www.iononline.com, offers solutions to this question.

Launched in 2002, ION's Web site has been the exclusive online resource for the network's membership of community-based oncologists. In June 2006, 60 ION members participated in the ION Membership Technology Survey.⁴ One hundred percent of participants stated that they had Internet access within their practice, while more than half went online on a daily basis to locate medical information. To accommodate the technical sophistication of the membership, ION's Web site has undergone numerous transformations to provide members with up-to-date news and information and vital practice tools. Recent enhancements to the Web site have included an easier navigation process through which more of the site's features are now readily-accessible from the home page.

Group Purchasing Organization

The Web site, www.iononline.com, mirrors the core services of the oncology network. ION's group purchasing component (housed under GPO Function from the home page) is reflected through the site, offering electronic copies of every drug declaration available through ION's membership, each of which can be submitted directly through the network's Web site. Comprehensive listings of the pharmaceutical partners that support ION's value-added services are also available. Each listing includes a direct link to the associated pharmaceutical partner's unique Web site. From the GPO segment, members can launch www.oncologysupply.com, the Web site of Oncology Supply Company (OSC), ION's exclusive drug distributor. The OSC Web site is currently utilized by approximately 2,000 ION members and offers next-day delivery of 1,800 chemotherapy and medical surgical products.



Oncology Supply's Web site enables ION members to purchase drugs directly through the Web, a concept driven by customers' requests. Stuart McMahan, OSC's Director of Web Services, recalled the initial launch of the OSC Web site. "I can remember the excitement of receiving 13 e-commerce orders in one day when we first launched. Now, we frequently process in excess of 600 orders each day. We learned very quickly that our customers' needs were very unique, and that most off-the-shelf products would not support their requests. After thorough analysis of our clients' needs," continued McMahan, "as technology has advanced and our platform has evolved, we have added dozens of enhancements, including site product availability, customer-specific pricing, and sales order history information updates within a matter of seconds." OSC's Web site also offers an exceptionally comprehensive Drug Reimbursement Report with updates that coincide with Center for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS) releases.

Pharmacy & Dispensing Program

As more practices are evaluating new revenue resources, ION's Web site directs ION members towards the benefits of practice-based pharmaceutical services, including in-house dispensing and pharmacy, and e-prescribing. For members who partake in e-prescribing, prescriptions can be electronically submitted

to their chosen pharmacy. Practices are compensated for data generated from product claims. Online enrollment forms for ION's unique pharmacy services are available by clicking on the Pharmacy Program tab from ION's home page. This segment of ION's Web site also provides the membership with an array of clinical guidelines created to help physicians develop treatment practices.

ION Protocol Analyzer

One of the key features of the network's Web site is ION's Protocol Analyzer (PA). Utilized by over 600 ION members on a monthly basis, PA is a state-of-the-art software program that calculates the overall cost of delivering chemotherapy in the community-based practice. By inputting the cost of their drugs, the practice's aggregate chemotherapy chair time, and billing and collections, physicians can calculate the total expense incurred by their practice. The application is preloaded with common, referenced drug regimens and National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) treatment guidelines, the standard cost of drugs from Oncology Supply, and the most recent reimbursement information for CMS. Once a downloadable application, the tool has been upgraded to an online model designed to incorporate real-time pricing; click-throughs for the applications have been decreased by 33 percent to allow for easier navigation.

Educational Meetings

ION's Web site includes an overview of the numerous educational events developed to keep oncologists, practice administrators, and nurses well informed. Through the network's Web site, members can view a frequently-updated schedule of events and can conveniently register for upcoming events directly through the Web.

As a new service to the network, ION's well-recognized, disease-specific national conferences are now available to members via real-time Web broadcasting. In addition, a unique library of live and archived Web-based educational events are hosted on the site.

ION's Communications & Publications

In addition to the video capture of all major ION meetings, the company's collection of news and publications relevant to the community-based oncologist are also available online, current and archived. These include clinical and reimbursement newsletters, featured news, and *Oncologistics* magazine. The most downloaded item on ION's Web site, the print version of this quarterly publication is distributed to all



ION physicians, nurses, administrators, and pharmacists in the U.S. and features original articles addressing issues pertaining to the delivery of quality cancer care, from clinical information to the business of oncology.

Reimbursement Information

As the shape of the practice landscape changes under constantly-evolving reimbursement legislation, ION now offers an array of Web-based resources designed to keep practices informed and prepared with a wealth of resources to assist its membership.

The ION/IPN Practice Reimbursement Series is a monthly Web-administered program developed by ION to help member practices stay abreast of breaking issues that impact community-based care providers. Topics have included the Oncology Demonstration project, National Provider Identifier (NPI) and Medicare's enrollment process, and the 2007 Medicare Fee Schedule. The monthly webcast under this series is hosted by coding and reimbursement expert Jean Acevedo, L.H.R.M., C.P.C., C.H.C. By logging onto ION's Web site, ION members can register for ION's Coding Workshop, another practical online series. In conjunction with the Lash Group, this event covers key topics such as basic coding rules and standards including 2007 changes for drug and drug administration coding, and a review of evaluation and management (E&M) coding and documentation requirements.

Online registration is available through ION's site for both events and archives of the webcasts are immediately posted to ION's Web site at the conclusion of each session. Over 1,000 ION members have participated in these events since their inception in September of 2006.

Under Membership Benefits, located on the home page of ION's Web site, members can access timely reimbursement and legislative updates, including the monthly newsletter, *Oncology NOW*. Also, from the home page of ION's Web site, members can locate Vital Reimbursement Resources under the "What's New" segment. Instead of sifting through complicated Web sites and hard-to-find documents, ION eliminates the tedious hide-and-seek process and provides members with direct links to pertinent materials such as CMS and Medicare enrollment forms, which are located on ION's Web site.

WEB STATS

- Average number of unique visits to www.iononline.com per month: **7,100**
- Average number of hits per month: **316,957**
- Average number of downloads from www.iononline.com per month: **13,880**
- Top download from www.iononline.com: ***Oncologistics* magazine**
- Average number of downloaded copies per month: **4,142**





To fully optimize ION's Web site, members should login with a valid, ION-issued login ID and password. For login assistance or to obtain a password, please e-mail **memberID@iononline.com**.

For questions or suggestions regarding ION's Web site, please e-mail the Web Site Manager at **elise.laprade@iononline.com**.

Coming Soon...

In order to streamline the current login process, as early as January 2007 ION and OSC Web site registrants will be able to use the same login and password combination for both sites and thus be able to toggle through both service provider and distributor seamlessly.

With the popularity of the ION/IPN Practice Reimbursement Series, ION will be launching an online reimbursement forum through which members can post questions to coding expert Jean Acevedo, L.H.R.M., C.P.C., C.H.C. and also post messages to other members. This forum will also incorporate blogging (utilization of a Web site where entries are made in diary-style and displayed in a reverse chronological order), enabling members to keep an online reimbursement journal.

Conclusion

The December 25, 2006 issue of *TIME* magazine lists you as their famed Person of the Year, a title we received by our society's use of online technology and its profound affect on our daily lives. According to ION's Director of Information Services, Chris Boyd, "The Electronic Age has greatly improved not only the way we communicate but by the information that we gather. As the nature of our business and industry changes, we are preparing to partner with our business partners and lead the charge into the next big thing."

Boyd concludes, "It should become clear that ION/IPN not only views itself as a GPO, but also as a key service partner. None of our customer's needs should ever go unmet. If a question is asked, then an answer or solution should be provided. The key to meeting these high demands will be through the creation of innovative, technology-driven tools such as an ION Internet portal. Through technology, ION's goal will be proactively surpassing all expectations of our valued colleagues both up and down stream within our network." ●

Elise LaPrade is ION/IPN's Web Site Manager. Prior to joining the company in 2003, she held business development and advertising positions in an online marketing company.

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