

VIRGINIA

Virginia Cancer Registry; John LaDouceur

The Transition to Electronic Reporting

NATIONAL PROGRAM OF CANCER REGISTRIES SUCCESS STORY

SUMMARY: The Virginia Cancer Registry (VCR) embarked on the monumental task of getting physician practices to report their cancer case submissions electronically. This endeavor meant transitioning providers who currently report on paper over to electronic submission of their patient cancer data. VCR also took the step of on-boarding Eligible Professionals (EP) who have not begun to fulfill their mandated responsibility to report. VCR's approach began with analyzing the Virginia Department of Health (VHD) Meaningful Use System to identify physician practices that signed up to report for the public health measure, Cancer Registry Reporting, but never followed through with any submission. It was theorized that if these potential reporters signed up to report on their own, then there would be less resistance to begin the reporting process. An additional approach was to identify potential reporting sources by seeking out specific physician practices that may have provided treatment to patients in their office. Often, the only information reported was from a lab and treatment information was not reported. VCR concentrated efforts on dermatology, hematology, and GI practices, and utilizing the physician list obtained from the Department of Health Professions to validate EPs and crosswalk with registered reporters.

CHALLENGE: VCR has found it is one thing for practices to have the desire to report electronically, but quite another getting them to follow through with the process. Many challenges have presented along the way because most providers do not have the time and/or resources necessary to fulfill their legal responsibility to report; capacity is limited.

Potential reporters are given three options for reporting – via their own electronic interface, through our WebPlus reporting portal, or by using VCR-supplied Abstract Plus reporting software and then transmitting the cancer data files via secure channels. While each of these options fulfill state reporting requirements, all have positive and negative aspects from the reporting entities point of view.

One of the biggest challenges that VCR faces is convincing the potential reporters that, besides the fact that cancer reporting is mandated by the state, it is also the right thing to do. Our staff explain that patient data information can lead to trends, trends lead to information, and information leads to improved decision-making, planning and implementation of strategies and interventions to reduce cancer burden in Virginia. We reinforce the message that this specialized knowledge is what may eventually lead to cures.

Although electronic reporting via an electronic interface is nearly automatic and hands-free for reporters, it comes with a significant cost. Typically, a certified cancer reporting EMR vendor will charge a practice anywhere from \$3,000–\$10,000 for initial set-up, and then additional fees for support. For many practices, the cost is a deal-breaker. Reporting via Web Plus or Abstract Plus requires someone to learn how to use the software and enter the data required for cancer reporting. VCR understands that every facility does not have the resources to hire a CTR, but believes the next best course of action would be for these practices to develop their own qualified personnel, which is an where VCR can lend a hand.

SOLUTION: VCR listened to our stakeholders and have come to the realization that the best solution to solve many reporting issues is through increased and enhanced training and education. From the very beginning of the reporting process, VCR will educate potential reporters on the reasons that cancer reporting is so important. We impress on them the immense value of their data for cancer surveillance. Their information helps to better describe their patients' cancer experiences, and adds to the picture of cancer in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States.

This year Virginia has become part of the Fundamental Learning Collaborative for the Cancer Surveillance Community (FLccSC) initiative (referred to as "Flossie"). FLsSC is a learning management system developed collaboratively by the Florida Cancer Data System and the South Carolina Central Cancer Registry. The system allows VCR to create specialized courses for new reporters and is available online. Best of all, it is free to our reporters! This will save reporting facilities thousands in education costs, while producing better quality cancer data reporting to VCR.

Signing on with FLccSC has been a win-win for everyone, since it also allows VCR to collaborate with other states to compare training notes. This ensures that only the most effective training programs are being offered to our reporters. The beauty of this learning system is that courses are designed for students of all experience and skill levels. There are courses and modules for those that are new to the cancer surveillance field and continuing education for the seasoned professional. VCR tailors training modules related to important areas such as electronic reporting to assist those trying to commence electronic reporting.

This training platform also allows VCR to reach many more students than on-site field training and gives learners the flexibility of training in the comfort of their own space.

RESULTS: The Registry's efforts have provided notable positive results. Increasing our electronic reporting has led to a huge decrease in the paper case submissions that we receive on an annual basis. Where only a year ago we received over 7500 cases annually, we are now down to 6000. This means less labor-intensive case abstracting, processing, less space needed to house paper reports, and faster case consolidation. All of this has reduced operating costs; allowed staff to process cases more efficiently, and has reduced paper consumption, which will have a positive impact on the environment.

Through our training initiatives, we have been able to contribute to a more educated workforce. It is widely known that education boosts productivity, which will have a direct impact on our reporting facilities' bottom line. This means that money that would have been spent on education and training for their staff can now be directed toward patient care.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS: Although it can be difficult to gain buy-in for practices to report, VCR finds that once they are in the swing of reporting and the process becomes routine for them, they begin to gain a sense of pride in their effort and work. One of the biggest rewards is seeing the reporting partners begin to feel that they have become part of a larger cancer registry team, and more importantly, primary contributors in the fight against cancer.

In order to sustain the success that VCR has achieved, it will require the nurturing of relationships with new reporters and continuing to strengthen established bonds with long-time paper reporters as we transition them to electronic reporting. As previously mentioned, education and training are the key to reaching the VCR's goal of full compliance with electronic reporting. It will be of the utmost importance for VCR to closely monitor both new and existing reporters using FLccSC to assess their utilization and progress of the training. Through FLccSC, we can monitor strengths and weaknesses which will allow VCR to develop individualized training courses. Another very important objective for VCR is to strengthen reporting rules and regulations for those reporters that refuse to engage in the process. Although VCR makes every effort to accommodate those that need help, it is unfair to those that do comply, to allow others to avoid our request for provider engagement. VCR has begun the process to review existing law and regulations to maximize compliance in cancer case reporting. VCR is sensitive to creating friction with any of our reporting partners, and any action implemented would only occur after VCR has exhausted all other avenues.

VCR has found another obstacle is that many of their EMR vendors are not certified to report their cancer data electronically. We inform them that there are certified vendors available that provide this service, we also make clear that we are willing to make every effort to work with them and their EMR vendor to get them to report electronically. We are thoroughly pleased that we do have vendors that have taken steps to become certified to report cancer cases electronically. VCR views this as a success, since not only will they be able to get a particular practice up and running, but they will be able to offer this service to other entities reporting to VCR.

VCR realizes that moving to all electronic reporting is a monumental task, but are committed to seeing it through to the end. We understand the demands on physicians are real, but also realize the important role they play in cancer surveillance. We are constantly reassuring them that they are not alone in this process, that we are here for them, and consider them true partners in the fight against cancer!

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