



Oncology Pathways Frequently Asked Questions:

Overview

Oncology clinical pathways are defined by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) as detailed, evidence-based treatment protocols for specific disease types and stages that deliver high-quality cancer care. With the rapid approval of new therapies, along with the rising cost of cancer care, pathways aim to serve a critical role in the delivery of high-quality and high-value cancer treatments while reducing unwarranted variations in care.

Optum has introduced the Optum Oncology Pathways to help improve quality and value in cancer care by supporting the use of therapies associated with the best clinical outcomes.

Frequently asked questions

Program details

What are Optum Oncology Pathways?

Optum Oncology Pathways are one of the ways we work with health care professionals to help improve quality and value. This program provides evidence-based treatments we've selected to be included in the Optum Oncology Pathways after a rigorous evaluation that considers efficacy, toxicity, and value.

You can find more information on the Optum Oncology Pathways [here](#).

What are Optum Oncology Pathways?

Optum Oncology Pathways are detailed, evidence-based protocols that help provide support for specific cancer disease types and stages. Pathways are important tools that can help improve quality and reduce costs.

Which cancers are included in the Optum Oncology Pathways?

Pathways are available for a number of cancer types. You can see the most updated cancer pathways [here](#).

We'll add pathways for other cancers once our Optum Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee reviews and approves them. You can find the list of all current cancers with pathways [here](#).

Participation

What are the benefits of participating in the Optum Oncology Pathways?

This program promotes the use of highly effective cancer treatment regimens with the objective of improving the quality and value of care for your patients.

Who is eligible to participate and earn rewards?

You're eligible to participate if:

- You're submitting prior authorization requests for chemotherapy or related therapies through Optum's Cancer Guidance Program for patients whose insurance coverage includes Optum Cancer Guidance program.

Where is the Optum Oncology Pathways available?

Health care professionals in all states are eligible to use the Optum Cancer Therapy Pathway if the member they serve has an insurance plan that is managed by Optum Cancer Guidance Program.

How do I participate in the Optum Oncology Pathways?

If you've selected and received approval for one of the Optum Cancer Therapy Pathway regimens as part of the chemotherapy prior authorization process, you're participating in the program.

Am I required to participate in the Optum Oncology Pathways?

No. The Optum Oncology Pathways is a voluntary program. We don't require selection of a pathway regimen, and it won't affect coverage decisions or how you're reimbursed. However, the selection of a Cancer Therapy Pathway regimen is required to be counted towards pathway adherence.

How do you determine pathway adherence?

We determine pathway adherence based on how often you've selected a Optum Cancer Therapy Pathway as part of the authorization process when we offer one.

- We'll base the calculation on the number of approved authorizations where you selected a Cancer Therapy Pathway, compared to the total number of authorizations where we offered a Cancer Therapy Pathway during the authorization process
- In determining pathway adherence, we won't include authorization requests for cancer types where a Cancer Therapy Pathway isn't available
- Custom Regimen request will not count towards pathway adherence and may count against adherence if a pathway option was shown

Optum Oncology Pathways are not a substitute for the experience and judgment of a physician or other health care professional. Any physician participating in the program must use independent medical judgment in the context of individual clinical circumstances to determine any patient's care or treatment. Care decisions are between the physician and the patient. We don't make decisions about the kind of care that should or shouldn't be received.

Is a pre-determination request eligible for pathways?

Some member plans don't require a prior authorization but do allow for a pre-determination. Pre-determination requests will count toward adherence.

Is an oral-only regimen eligible for pathways?

Oral-only regimens that are considered to be on Pathway are available for select clients. If you have questions regarding the oral only pathway eligibility, please contact the members insurance provider.

Is a supportive drug eligible for pathways?

Pathways only exist for chemotherapy regimens. If you select a pathways regimen and are offered the option to add a supportive drug, it will count toward adherence. If you submit a request using "create custom requests" with a supportive drug, it will not count toward adherence.

How do I find out the results of my practice's participation in the program?

The Optum Oncology Pathways dashboard contains information about your practice's participation and adherence by tax ID number (TIN).

This dashboard is available for viewing through Optum's Cancer Guidance Program online portal accessible through the Optum Clinical Manager Portal.

Why do the numbers on the provider dashboard not reflect my authorization records?

- The dashboard only reflects authorizations submitted for members with plan coverage that includes the Optum Cancer Guidance Program
- The dashboard reflects authorizations based on the TIN that submitted the request
- Due to National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) updates or new evidence, a regimen's pathway designation may have changed

Pathway's development

How do you develop the Optum Oncology Pathways?

We develop pathways based on a comprehensive review of clinical data and national evidence-based guidelines. We first summarize this information into evidence tables. Then, we augment the tables with drug costs and real-world evidence on the frequency of hospitalizations during treatment, duration of therapy and total cost of care.

The Oncology Advisory Committee uses these evidence summaries to select pathway regimens, which are based on clinical benefit (efficacy) and side-effect profile (toxicity). Among regimens with comparable efficacy and toxicity, we give additional consideration to the frequency of hospitalizations during treatment, duration of therapy, drug costs and total cost of care.

You can find more information about how we develop pathways and a complete list of pathways [here](#).

Who develops Optum Oncology Pathways?

Our Optum Oncology Pathways are developed by the Optum Oncology Advisory Committee that:

- Advises Optum and its respective clients by reviewing evidence and providing consultation
- Recommends regimens to the Optum Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee that it believes should be included in the Optum Oncology Pathways
- Supports our pharmacy and medical benefits by promoting clinically appropriate, safe and cost-effective regimens that are based on clinical evidence, and community and national standards of practice

Who are the members of the Oncology Advisory Committee?

The Oncology Advisory Committee includes a diverse group of medical oncologists and hematologists who are actively treating patients at academic medical centers and in community oncology practices. Some of the members have also contributed to research by participating as investigators in clinical trials and/or publications in major oncology journals. We select external advisors based on their clinical expertise and diverse perspectives.

Does Optum have a process to manage conflicts of interest for external advisors?

We screen all of our advisors for potential financial conflicts of interest. Experts who have a substantive financial relationship with a company that develops or markets products that could benefit from pathways are not invited to participate. Additionally, at the start of every meeting, we remind our advisors to disclose any potential financial conflicts of interest so they can be evaluated by the committee chair.

On which scientific evidence do you base your Optum Oncology Pathways?

Optum Oncology Pathways are based on the best available high-quality evidence published in leading scientific journals (i.e., New England Journal of Medicine, Journal of Clinical Oncology) as well as recommendations in clinical guidelines published by ASCO, National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) and other professional and scientific organizations.

We include a list of references with each pathway and make the information available [here](#).

Do you provide information on the specific cancer type, stage and molecular profile that the pathway is intended to cover?

Pathways are specific to molecular subtype, stage, line(s) of therapy or genetic aberrations per cancer type, wherever applicable.

How will I know if a regimen is part of the Optum Oncology Pathways?

Pathway regimens are clearly labeled with a special icon during selection of NCCN-supported regimens within the Optum Cancer Guidance Program. You can find more resources and a complete list of pathway regimens per cancer type in Optum's Cancer Guidance Program and [here](#).

How often will you update the Optum Oncology Pathways?

We review our pathways at least annually and more frequently, as needed, when we discover new data or updated guidelines.

Does Optum consider external clinical data from pharmaceutical companies when developing the pathways?

Optum develops pathways based on a comprehensive review of clinical information and national evidence-based guidelines available publicly and does not accept any data from pharmaceutical companies.

Resources

Where can I find regimens that are included in Optum Oncology Pathways?

You can find Optum Oncology Pathways [here](#).

Who can I contact if I have questions?

If you have questions, you can email ohsclinicalguidelines_pathways@optum.com