



CANCER COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

President's Cancer Panel | June 13, 2014, San Diego, CA
Workshop Brief

Background

The widespread uptake of health information technology and the development of digital communication tools have dramatically altered the way individuals and patients receive and share cancer-related information, participate in their own care, and seek support. Expanded access to high-speed Internet and connected devices has enabled individuals to access vast amounts of cancer information on line. Digital communication tools—including social media and other participatory technologies—have potential to support health management and promote healthy behaviors, for example, by informing and motivating individuals to engage in actions to prevent cancer. They can also support decision making around cancer screening, early detection, treatment, participation in clinical trials, and healthy survivorship.

Advances in health information technology have transformed the way the public health community conceptualizes and carries out cancer communication efforts. Digital tools have potential to extend the reach of communication initiatives, deliver more-individualized messages to target audiences, and facilitate information

exchange with healthcare providers. However, numerous challenges are associated with digital health communication, such as potential harms resulting from widespread dissemination of non-credible or inaccurate information. As a result, health professionals are increasingly challenged with helping the public understand and act upon cancer-related messages from a growing variety of sources.

The President's Cancer Panel (the Panel), established by the National Cancer Act of 1971 (P.L. 92-218), is charged with monitoring the National Cancer Program and reporting on barriers to progress against cancer. The Panel collects information through workshops with stakeholders and additional information gathering. Findings and recommendations are compiled in reports to the President of the United States. **The Panel focused its efforts in 2014 on examining the use of digital tools to enhance cancer-related communications. An exploratory workshop was held to gather input from various stakeholders and experts with the goal of identifying high-priority topics for further investigation in subsequent workshops.**

Workshop

On June 13, 2014, the Panel convened a group of thought leaders to participate in a series planning workshop titled “Cancer Communication in the Digital Era: Opportunities and Challenges.” Representatives from the academic research community, government agencies, advocacy organizations, and nonprofit organizations discussed the broad topic of technology-driven communication to support cancer prevention, control, and survivorship and brainstormed possible general focus areas and specific topics for exploration for a workshop series, including key questions

and potential stakeholders and participants. Also considered were potential frameworks within which a series could be organized.

See “For More Information” below to access the agenda, participant list, one-page workshop statement, and detailed summary minutes, which include summaries of facilitated discussions and presentations by Bradford Hesse, PhD, of the National Cancer Institute, and Eric Topol, MD, of Scripps Translational Science Institute, Scripps Health, and Scripps Research Institute.

Outcomes

Following the workshop, the Panel reviewed the meeting materials, along with additional information, and conducted further discussions with stakeholders to identify a topic of focus for a subsequent meeting series.

The Panel determined that *cancer communication in the digital era* is a vast subject area with many potential subtopics. Workshop participants highlighted numerous opportunities for individuals to use technology to manage health and illnesses. In reviewing potential directions the series could take, the Panel considered several factors, including its criteria for topic selection. The Panel prioritizes topics that are timely and manageable, and that have strong potential to result in concrete, actionable recommendations.

Connected health as a model for health management—wherein all participants in a patient’s care have access to information and tools needed to support decisions regarding cancer

prevention, treatment, survivorship, and end-of-life care—emerged as an important topic area among many considered. The subsequent meeting series “Connected Health: Improving Patients’ Engagement and Activation for Cancer-Related Outcomes” examined the evolving health information landscape and related trends in technology, communication, healthcare, and policy that are reshaping interactions between individuals, care teams, and healthcare systems. Workshop participants visualized the future of a connected health system that places individuals, patients, and caregivers at the center and described actions needed to achieve the goal of maximizing connected health to improve cancer-related outcomes.

Findings and recommendations were presented in a November 2016 report to the President of the United States titled “Improving Cancer-Related Outcomes with Connected Health.” See “For More Information” below to access workshop information and the report to the President.

For More Information

For more information on this workshop, “Cancer Communication in the Digital Era: Opportunities and Challenges,” and the subsequent series, “Connected Health: Improving Patients’ Engagement and Activation for Cancer-Related Outcomes,” click on the links below or visit the President’s Cancer Panel website: <https://PresCancerPanel.cancer.gov>

Cancer Communication in the Digital Era: Opportunities and Challenges

Workshop Materials

- Agenda [[pdf](#)]
- One-page workshop statement [[pdf](#)]
- Summary minutes [[pdf](#)]

Participants

David B. Abrams, PhD, The Schroeder Institute for Tobacco Research and Policy Studies, Legacy

David K. Ahern, PhD, Brigham & Women’s Hospital, Harvard Medical School, and National Cancer Institute

Nelvis Castro, BS, National Cancer Institute

Wen-ying Sylvia Chou, PhD, MPH, National Cancer Institute

Robert Croyle, PhD, National Cancer Institute

Robert D. Furberg, PhD, MBA, RTI International

Peter Garrett, AB, National Cancer Institute

Karen Glanz, PhD, MPH, University of Pennsylvania

David H. Gustafson, PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Bradford W. Hesse, PhD (co-chair), National Cancer Institute

Beth Karlan, MD, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

Sanjay Koyani, MPH, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Barry S. Kramer, MD, PhD, National Cancer Institute

Helen I. Meissner, ScM, PhD, National Institutes of Health

Kevin Patrick, MD, MS, University of California, San Diego and The Qualcomm Institute

Lygeia Ricciardi, EdM, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Barbara K. Rimer, DrPH, President’s Cancer Panel and UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

Julia H. Rowland, PhD, National Cancer Institute

Abby B. Sandler, PhD, National Cancer Institute

Shannon Stokley, MPH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Eric Topol, MD, Scripps Translational Science Institute, Scripps Health, and The Scripps Research Institute

Kasisomayajula “Vish” Viswanath, PhD, Harvard School of Public Health, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center

Owen N. Witte, MD, President’s Cancer Panel and University of California, Los Angeles

Connected Health: Improving Patients' Engagement and Activation for Cancer-Related Outcomes

Workshop Materials

- Workshop 1—Engaging Patients with Connected Health Technologies
December 11, 2014
Cambridge, MA
- Workshop 2—The Personal Health Data Revolution, Connected Health, and Cancer
March 26, 2015
San Francisco, CA
- Workshop 3—The Connected Cancer Patient: Vision for the Future and Recommendations for Action
July 9, 2015
Chicago, IL

Report

- Improving Cancer-Related Outcomes with Connected Health: A Report to the President of the United States from the President's Cancer Panel

About the President's Cancer Panel

The President's Cancer Panel comprises three members appointed by the President of the United States. Members are Barbara K. Rimer, DrPH (Chair), Dean and Alumni Distinguished Professor, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health; Hill Harper, JD, cancer survivor, best-selling author, actor, and philanthropist; and Owen N. Witte, MD, University Professor, University of California, Los Angeles and Director, UCLA Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research.