



# Affordable Care Act: Pain Management

Pain remains one of the most feared and burdensome symptoms for cancer patients and survivors. Open communication with health care professionals about pain, the medications for it, and other methods available to treat it is essential to relieve symptoms and improve quality of life.

Integrating pain and symptom management earlier and more often in treatment will help patients feel and live better with their cancer, even if they don't get better. But the evidence demonstrating continuing gaps in cancer pain control is now well established, and it calls out the need to ensure that pain is discussed, assessed, and treated to provide relief to every patient as part of every clinical visit.

## Fast Facts

- Pain associated with cancer can almost always be relieved, yet it is a problem in at least 60% of patients in active treatment.
- Cancer-related pain can interfere with patients' ability to complete scheduled treatments, and can devastate quality of life – affecting work, appetite, sleep, and time with family and friends.
- Significant disparities in pain treatment exist among medically underserved populations.
- Less than 1% of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget is invested in pain and symptom management research.

## **Improving quality of life for patients and survivors is a high priority for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN).**

### **Highlights of Pain Management in the Affordable Care Act**

The law includes provisions pulled directly from the National Pain Care Policy Act – priority legislation for ACS CAN. These include authorization for:

- Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) to convene a conference on pain, followed by a report of conference findings that establish an agenda for action to improve pain research, education, and clinical care in the United States
- Establishing an Interagency Pain Research Coordinating Committee to coordinate HHS efforts relating to pain research, including making recommendations for expanding an aggressive program of basic and clinical research across the NIH on the causes and potential treatments of pain
- Health professional education and training grants through HHS to develop and implement programs for improving pain care, including a specific requirement for addressing barriers to care in underserved populations; grants include evaluation of programs implemented to determine their effect on knowledge and practice of pain care

### **Implications for the American Cancer Society and ACS CAN**

- The Society would be eligible to seek nomination for participation as a consumer representative on the new Interagency Pain Research Coordinating Committee.
- ACS CAN will need to advocate for funds to be appropriated to pay for these new pain provisions.