

# OPTAReview

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ONCOLOGY PHARMACY TECHNICIAN ASSOCIATION | APRIL 2022

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STORY OF HER FIGHT TO BEAT BREAST CANCER

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OF PHARMACY OPERATIONS AT AON, ASHLEY  
KOHLEGER-BERGER HELPS TO IMPROVE PHARMACY  
SERVICES FOR BETTER PATIENT CARE

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## WELCOME

# TRAINING TECHNICIANS: INTRODUCING ONCOLOGY & MID STANDARDS

BY TERI ROBERTS, CPhT

ARIZONA ONCOLOGY

The Medically Integrated Dispensary (MID) has become extremely advantageous for cancer patients receiving oral chemotherapy. The patient's cancer treatment involves the entire multidisciplinary team including the dispensary. Training pharmacy technicians who are new to the MID setting can be a bit challenging as there are many processes and procedures that are different than to a retail pharmacy setting. Here are a few tips on training a new pharmacy technician in an oncology MID setting:

### 1) Prior Authorizations:

Training a new pharmacy technician who has little to no experience in oncology and prior authorizations has many challenges. They must understand how to interpret the complicated questions asked by insurance companies regarding scans, labs, and other prior treatments. A good place to start teaching is EMR basics and how to navigate and sift through the patient's chart to find all the important information.

SCAN QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION



**2) Financial Assistance:** The cost of oral oncology medications is extremely expensive and often patients cannot afford the copay. It is imperative that the trainee learn which foundations, websites, and vouchers to obtain to help alleviate cost of the patient's medication. Learning to ask the right questions to attain these services can expedite the patient starting therapy on time or in a timely manner.

### 3) Coordination of Care:

It is important to convey the importance of patient education and how it can impact treatment. Also, coordinating and communicating with the entire multidisciplinary team to make sure the patient has all the resources and information on their oral oncolytic and supportive medication helps with adherence and better patient outcomes.

These are just a few tips on training a new pharmacy technician for an MID position. Dispensing oral chemotherapy requires a great amount of attention to detail, clinical knowledge and the care and passion to treat cancer patients.

## MARCH MEETING RECAP

BY TARYN NEWSOME, CPhT

OPTA COORDINATOR | NCODA

## WELCOME

The OPTA March meeting began with OPTA Leader Linda Grimsley, CPhT, reading OPTA's Mission and Vision Statements as well as OPTA's Primary Goals. OPTA Coordinator, Taryn Newsome followed with NCODA and OPTA updates. Newsome shared that registration for the 2022 Spring Forum is filling up quickly. At Spring Forum, there will be 3 breakout tracks specifically for oncology pharmacy technicians and CE will be provided as well.

Newsome announced the new online member communication platform called NCODA Connect. On this new platform, OPTA members will be able to participate in discussion with one another, download useful resources and documents, access OPTA's past monthly meeting

library and a plethora of information.

NCODA's Career Share Network was also shared by Newsome. The Career Share Network can be accessed by logging into NCODA Connect and you will find recent job openings for physicians, pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians.

## TECHNICIAN IN FOCUS: PAGE 5



## OPTAReview

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## OPTAOpportunities

### MEETING PRESENTATIONS

OPTA members are invited to participate in monthly meetings by providing:

- Drug Updates
- Peer Presentations
- Technician / Practice in Focus

### OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- NCODA National Monthly Webinar
- NCODA Conferences/ Meetings

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact:

- Ginger.Blackmon@ncoda.org
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## OPTAResources

### NCODA DISCUSSION BOARD

<https://www.ncoda.org/discussion/pharm-tech/>

### BASECAMP DOCUMENT STORAGE

<https://3.basecamp.com/3780922/reports/progress>

### NCODA/OPTA WEBSITE

<https://www.ncoda.org/oncology-pharmacy-technician-association-opta/>

## OPTACE

VISIT THE NCODA WEBSITE TO  
ACCESS THE FREE CE PAGE

<https://www.ncoda.org/opta/>

## OPTA LEADER IN FOCUS

# STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE: ACCREDITATION AUDIT TIPS FOR SUCCESS

BY VONDA MCCLENDON, CPhT  
TEXAS ONCOLOGY

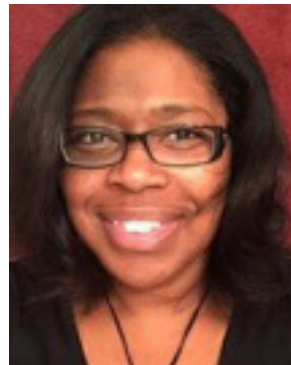
In the Medically Integrated Dispensing realm, striving for excellence in all areas is non-negotiable. From the first oncologist visit to the final treatment, exceptional patient care is our goal. Recently our practice sites have participated in several audits in preparation for accreditation.

So, one might ask, why get accredited? What does it mean to get an accreditation? Successfully navigating the accreditation process means that your organization has 'demonstrated the ability to meet predetermined criteria for established standards.'<sup>1</sup> It is recognition for showing next-level excellence and benefits your organization in a number of ways.

Some of these benefits include access to more payors. Increasingly, payors are adding accreditation to their criteria for in-network participation. Also, this 'seal of approval' makes an organization more attractive and competitive by showing exemplary skills in patient care, safety, and competency for clinical case management.

Here are a few tips on preparing for a successful accreditation audit:

• It's all in the details – Be very thorough. This will include EHR and pharma-



Vonda McClendon

cy records. Ensure that state and federal guidelines are followed

• The team, the team, the team – part of accreditation is showing that the entire team is on the same page regarding a patient's plan of care. This should be reflected in your documentation

• Getting your 'staff' ducks in a row – this begins

with onboarding, certifications, training related to working with cancer patients and showing ongoing skills evaluations

• Your patient's world – all information, initial assessments, care plans, medication profiles, progress, goals, outcomes, and discharges summaries

• Improving on success – every organization must have a plan to improve care, processes and/or procedures

The MID setting allows us to provide patients with a higher degree of care and safety. Accreditations give us a platform to show everyone how we do it. I highly encourage all to explore NCODA's medically integrated accreditation. This will be another advancement in the ever-expanding field of oncology.

### References:

1. <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/expert-insights/pharmacy-accreditation-is-it-worth-the-effort>

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NCODA CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
MEDICALLY INTEGRATED PHARMACY ACCREDITATION

Improved Patient Experience Better Outcomes  
Improved Clinician Experience Lower Costs

The NCODA COE MIP Accreditation Program meets the four goals of the Quadruple Aim

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# BEATING BREAST CANCER: A HEROIC JOURNEY OF COURAGE, FAITH & HOPE

Veletra Jackson is a dedicated pharmacy technician of 18 years. Wanting to provide more for her family, Veletra pursued a career as a pharmacy technician after working as a manager at a rehabilitation facility. There she was inspired and motivated to learn more about the medication she was giving to her patients. Today, Veletra is working as an IV pharmacy technician at Cancer Specialists of North Florida and has been there for the past 8 years. Veletra is breast cancer survivor and celebrated her last day of chemotherapy 3 weeks ago. This is her story...

My name is Veletra Jackson, I am a breast cancer survivor and this is my cancer journey.

It started out as a normal Tuesday morning while getting ready for work. The Holy Spirit placed my hand over my chest. In that moment, I felt a lump in my right breast. I proceeded on with my day as normal as possible. I was fearful but, I needed to remain positive. I waited for my husband to come home and had him palpate the

area where I felt the lump. He felt the lump and tried to remain calm by saying, "It feels like a cyst, let's not worry."

The following morning, I consulted with Dr. Shugarman from my practice, who did a breast exam. She felt the lump and immediately put in motion a diagnostic mammogram, ultrasound, and needle core biopsy if needed. I felt shaken, scared and afraid. From that day it has been whirlwind

of a rollercoaster ride. Hearing the words, "your biopsy came back positive for breast cancer", my heart felt heavy. I was terrified. I thought about my faith in God, my family and my new grand baby boy who was soon to be born. In the midst of me getting prepared for my first chemotherapy, I received a devastating call from my husband to

come to Memorial Hospital as soon as possible. Our 20-year-old son had been in a work related accident. Days later, he succumbed to his injuries. I tried to be strong both mentally and physically for myself and my family.

My faith in God never wavered. I knew I had a tough fight ahead of me. I geared up to kick cancer in its rear! Chemotherapies, surgeries, and radiation were not going to break me. I had the best doctors in Dr. Kalmadi, Dr. Shugarman, Dr. Ausgten and Dr. Bahari leading the way and tending to every aspect of my cancer journey. I felt safe and secure knowing my family at home and at work was in this fight with me.

I've learned through my journey that cancer IS NOT A death sentence. Because of those involved in my journey, I am able to stand tall. I can tell those in need of hearing my testimony how my faith and family support carried me. My treatment journey is complete, I am finally free to live my life, cancer free!



## TECH IN FOCUS

**Name:** Ashley Kohler-Gerber, CPhT

**Practice:** American Oncology Network (AON)

**How can OPTA or NCODA help you and your practice?** As a national support network of professionals, the ability to share and provide experiences with one another allows all of us to find ways to improve processes and identify possible best practices.

**What type of pharmacy does your practice contain (i.e., Medically Integrated Pharmacy, Retail, etc.)?**

American Oncology Network (AON) is a growing network of community oncology practices helping to ensure local access to high quality and exceptional care. AON has incredible pharmacy staff members, who not only support the clinical staff, but compound IV medications allowing for most of our practices to offer onsite infusion services. Currently I have the wonderful opportunity to work on our Pharmacy Operations team. Our team works as the pharmacy supporting role for the entire network. As a team we provide support and guidance for operational, clinical, and financial aspects of pharmacy.

**Explain your current role at your practice:**

As the Pharmacy Operations Regional Manager, I get the chance to work with, and help, our practices within AON's network, on their operational challenges. This can be anything from shortages and process changes to compliance. I get to work with an amazing team that all serve as subject matter experts, and we work together to provide the most optimal methods in support of our network's pharmacy services.

**What do your day-to-day responsibilities include?**

My day-to-day responsibilities can include many things. My days are rarely ever the same. My main job is to support current and changed processes, to help improve pharmacy services within our current network practices. This can be troubleshooting issues that arise during the day or working on projects regarding compliance and process improvements. There are a lot of meetings.



Ashley Kohler-Gerber

**Do you assume any specialized duties/responsibilities from time-to-time?**

As a pharmacy technician, I never thought I would be working in a national corporate environment, working with multiple departments that impact our pharmacy operations within our clinic. I consider working with our clinical pharmacist, financial departments, clinical management and even working with providers from time to time more specialized than my previous Pharmacy Technician positions.

**Do you have any "best-practices" that you use at your practice that you would like to share with OPTA members?**

One thing has led us to 'best-practices' within our team:

Reviewing regulations (USP 797,800 & others), our standard operating procedures and other applicable items.

As we review them as a team, it helps keep these items fresh in our minds and give us a chance to ask 'are we following this correctly?', 'are we doing this the best we can?' and 'does this need to be updated?'

**What do you enjoy most about your current position:**

I enjoy the environment of working with a team that has a foundation of a collaborative mindset. We work through processes, decisions, and changes together as a team to ensure we are identifying the most sustainable and best processes we can. This helps us identify opportunities for improvement and ensures we are seeing things from different angles.

**What advice do you have for any technicians who are new to the oncology/hematology field?**

I have seen the benefit of having a supportive network - in and out of where you work.

- Build relationships with other departments — they help give insight and support on issues that maybe connected with pharmacy or your role specifically.

- Join networks such as OPTA to help gain that support, ask questions, learn from other's experiences.

The best part about pharmacy, we are all in this to be better. We all want to help each other have the best, safest, and most efficient pharmacy practices possible.

**We're at the Forefront Of Oncology Pharmacy Technician Development. Join us and let your voice be heard to help improve patient care!**

**OPTA strives** to strengthen and empower dispensing staff's vital role by providing leadership and sharing knowledge to ensure better patient outcomes.

**OPTA connects** members from around the world.

**OPTA helps set** the standards for oncology pharmacy technicians.

**OPTA's success** is dependent on the contribution of each individual member.

**Scan QR Code to Join OPTA**

**NEXT OPTA MEETING:**

**3 p.m. EST, Wednesday,  
MAY 11TH, 2022**

Members will receive  
a calendar invitation

**OPTA Mission Statement**

Our Mission is to strengthen and empower oncology pharmacy technicians in their increasingly vital role as part of the medically-integrated team by providing leadership and professional development opportunities to ensure better outcomes for patients.

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