

OPTA Review

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



OPTA LEADER IN FOCUS: ALICIA BARNES
SHARES THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTING WITH OTHER OPTA MEMBERS

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AUGUST MEETING RECAP: CATCH UP ON
LAST MONTH'S WEBINAR PRESENTATIONS IN FULL DETAIL

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OPTA members at the 2022 Spring Forum reception in Atlanta, Georgia

WELCOME

THE PATH FORWARD PHARM TECHS & THE 2022 NCODA FALL SUMMIT

BY VONDA MCCLENDON, CPhT
TEXAS ONCOLOGY

Hello OPTA! Exciting times are happening this fall. Yes, I must admit pumpkin lattes and muffins are exciting but I'm referring to the upcoming NCODA Fall Summit in October. Oncology pharmacy technicians from across the country will assemble with other healthcare professionals to increase their knowledge as the Medically Integrated Pharmacy (MIP) setting continues to build and grow.

NCODA will kick-off the conference with a workshop called 'Step by Step to Begin In Office Dispensing Workshop'. This workshop is not only for those looking for guidance on how to set up an MIP, but also a wonderful opportunity for current MIP clinics to contribute to the conversation and learn more on how to promote better processes and procedures and best practices.

NCODA is ACPE accredited and will offer CE sessions for all during the summit. There are break-out sessions specifically for oncology pharmacy technicians that will help increase professional development. One of the break-out sessions will explore the 'Roles of Pharmacy Technicians in Patient Care'. As the healthcare industry continues to evolve, technicians are advancing their roles and skills as a pathway to new career opportunities. One of the roles that

we will be looking at is the role of a Clinical Research Coordinator. This presentation will take an in-depth look at how pharmacy technicians can work in the clinical research space.

Other topics to be explored are 'Healthcare Leadership within the Pharmacy' and 'Addressing Financial Assistance Obstacles to Support Patient Advocacy'. Pharmacy technicians are adept at demonstrating leadership in a variety of ways in the MIP setting. Our ability to interact, collaborate and connect with the entire multidisciplinary team makes all the difference for a successful patient care experience.

SCAN QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION



Come join the OPTA community at the 2022 NCODA Fall Summit. We are at the forefront of engaging and providing resources to oncology pharmacy technicians. The Oncology Pharmacy Technician Association (OPTA) is dedicated to empowering technicians in the Medically Integrated Pharmacy (MIP) environment through advocacy and education. By providing access to a variety of resources, message boards, oncology specific educational opportunities via webinars or connecting with other technicians in the online community, OPTA will equip you for success. If you are interested in joining this dynamic association, please contact Taryn Newsome, OPTA Coordinator at Taryn.Newsome@ncoda.org.

OPTAReview

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OPTA Special Presentations

- Organics- Tuesday October 4th @ 3pm EST
- GSK- Thursday October 13th @ 7pm EST

OPTA Partner

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF OPTA!



OPTALeaders

- Linda Grimsley, CPhT
- Emily Zimdars, CPhT
- Brandi Gudwien, CPhT
- Teri Roberts, CPhT
- Sara Eisenhart, CPhT
- Vonda McClendon, CPhT
- Alicia Barnes, CPhT

OPTA Opportunities

MEETING PRESENTATIONS

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

- Drug Updates/New Indication and Combination Therapy Overview
- Peer Presentations
- Technician in Focus

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- NCODA International Monthly Webinar
- NCODA Conferences/Meetings

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact:

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OPTA Resources

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

NCODA UNIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION

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



OPTA LEADER IN FOCUS

COLLABORATION OPTA PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT PLATFORM FOR ITS' MEMBERS TO NETWORK

BY ALICIA BARNES, CPhT
AMERICAN ONCOLOGY NETWORK

My name is Alicia Barnes and I live in Spokane, Washington. I have been a pharmacy technician for seven years and working in oncology for four years. In October 2018, I became a member of OPTA. I have a husband, two amazing boys (13 & 10) and two of the best dogs ever. I love working in oncology, and I love being on the sidelines of a football field watching my boys!

I joined AON in May of 2021 when my previous clinic merged with the AON family. I am on the Patient Assistance Team of our pharmacy located in Fort Myers, Florida. We service all 25 AON practices over 16 states.

I was introduced to NCODA and OPTA because I was new to oncology, and I wanted to



Alicia Barnes

connect with people in similar roles to help me learn the ropes and grow as an oncology pharmacy technician. There are many benefits of getting involved with OPTA. OPTA members have access to great learning resources and an extensive network to collaborate with other technicians that do what you do. Pharmacy is ever changing; oncology is no different. What works one week may not work the next.

Having a group of technicians to ask questions, pick their brains, and get new ideas is so valuable. OPTA is beneficial to equip us to provide the best patient care that we can.

Words of encouragement! Get involved with OPTA! You will meet so many amazing people all over the country and learn far more than you think you need to know. They are just an awesome group of people within a great organization!

TECH IN FOCUS-SEPTEMBER

Name: Amy Waldron, CPhT

Practice: Hematology-Oncology Associates of Fredericksburg

How can OPTA or NCODA help you and your practice? OPTA and NCODA can help myself and my practice by allowing me to collaborate with other fellow oncology pharmacy technicians

Explain your current role at your practice: I am the pharmacy manager and oversee the MIP as well as the infusion technicians

What do you enjoy most about your current position? I enjoy helping patients and overcoming challenges each day

What do your day-to-day responsibilities include? I oversee five technicians. I help with ordering, mixing, insurance verification, pharmacy audits and OSHA and HIPAA compliance

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

OSHA and HIPAA compliance, assisting in the research department and financial reporting

Do you have any "best-practices" that you use at your practice that you would like to share with OPTA members? If you see something, say something! Document everything!

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

Have compassion and put yourself in the patients' shoes. Have compassion when discussing finances with patients as we know that can be uncomfortable. Always work safe. Fight for what you know is right!



Amy Waldron



TECH IN FOCUS-AUGUST

Name: Kristina Carnell, CPhT

Practice: Specialty Pharmacy at the University of Rochester

How can OPTA or NCODA help you and your practice? I recently had the opportunity to attend the 2022 NCODA Spring Forum and learned vital information specifically for oncology pharmacy technicians. I was able to network with other oncology professionals from all over the country in different practices and roles. This was so important to me because it gave me tips and tools to use in my daily role as well as ideas on better patient care. Attending Spring Forum and networking allowed me to see things from a different perspective.

Explain your current role at your practice: I am a medication access specialist and I work one on one with a pharmacist to monitor and support our patients as they undergo their cancer treatments. I set up refills and deliveries, help with financial assistance, and anything else to support the best possible treatment outcomes.

What do you enjoy most about your current position? I enjoy the relationship I have built with my pharmacists, team members, as well as the patients and their families. Communication between the entire team is so important to ensure the patient is given the best care and they understand their treatment. I enjoy being able to help patients get access to treatment that will make them feel better. Also, I love just being able

to be an ear for patients to talk to and reassure them that we are here for them.

What do your day-to-day responsibilities include? My daily responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Data entry of new prescriptions
- Calling patients to set up refills and deliveries
- Calling insurances for overrides/rejections
- Signing patients up with financial assistance, such as, social work, copay cards, foundations/grants
- Inventory management



Kristina Carnell

Do you assume any specialized duties/responsibilities from time-to-time? I keep an eye on the different queues to make sure I process any new prescriptions that may have come through and make sure that the medications have been filled and dispensed on time and appropriately. I also take the initiative to do benefits investigation and look to see if a patient qualifies for copay assistance.

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

My advice is to do some research and learn the different drug treatments and indications. Learning the treatments helped me acclimate better in my role. Oncology is like its very own language separate from pharmacy.



NEXT OPTA MEETING:

3 p.m. EST, Wednesday,
October 12, 2022

Members will receive
a calendar invitation



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.



VISION Statement

OUR VISION IS THAT EACH PATIENT RECEIVES THE MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM THEIR CANCER TREATMENT BY CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY FOCUSED ON ADVANCING THE ROLE OF THE ONCOLOGY PHARMACY TECHNICIAN THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

AUGUST MEETING RECAP

BY BRANDI GUDWIEN, CPhT

OPTA LEADER

OPTA's August webinar was moderated by OPTA Coordinator Taryn Newsome, CPhT. OPTA's mission and vision statements were read by OPTA leader Vonda McClendon, CPhT (Texas Oncology). New members were welcomed and invited to introduce themselves in the chat box. OPTA's partners, including our new partner Genentech, were highlighted. OPTA and NCODA updates were presented by Taryn, including: 1) OPTA Review summer edition, 2) NCODA's Fall Summit set for Oct 27th-29th is FULL for technicians but technicians can be added to the waitlist, 3) Spring Forum's CEs are now available on-demand, and 4) reminder to join NCODA Connect for discussions and resources.

Kristie Fox, PharmD, NCODA Manager of Clinical Initiatives, began "Clinical Pearls of Practice Drug Storage of Monoclonal Antibodies" with reviewing the importance of NIOSH, a published list of hazardous drugs and their three classifications. While there is the main list by NIOSH, each organization should form a list of hazardous/nonhazardous drugs to store properly. Kristie then provided a clever way to identify monoclonal antibodies (mAb) as these drugs typically end in "-mab."

These aren't classified as hazardous by NIOSH because their large molecules are less likely to be absorbed by the skin or cause damage to the lungs from inhalation. Newer drugs, such as antibody conjugates, contain mAbs, and these are defined hazardous because not enough information is known. A Q&A session on mAb storage/classification highlighted best practices from OPTA members. For more information, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/index.htm>.

Elizabeth Heard, PharmD, NCODA Fellow Oncology, Advocacy, Health & Equity, discussed "Becoming CPhT Cross-Trained," meaning a technician is certified in both oral and intravenous chemotherapy. Top skills needed to be cross-trained include attention to detail, mathematics, organization, steady hands, patience, and aseptic technique. Elizabeth also stated the importance of proper attire when working with chemotherapy. She reviewed the pros and cons of being cross-trained, and how these may vary for everyone. Lastly, she advised to be aware of burnout and be an advocate for yourself.

Our Technician in Focus this month is Kristina Carnell, CPhT, who is a medication access specialist at Specialty Pharmacy, University of Rochester. She works one-on-one with a pharmacist to assist patients as they undergo cancer

treatments, whether it be refills, insurance, or financial assistance matters. Kristina enjoys the multiple relationships she's built with teammates and her patients. She thinks the opportunities and resources NCODA and OPTA provide are helpful in daily practice.

Kim Hamilton, Sr Clinical Specialist at Genentech, provided our sponsored special presentation entitled "VENCLEXTA® for the Treatment of CLL: Overview, Dosing, Administration and Patient Support." VENCLEXTA® has two indications in CLL. In first-line therapy, it is given in combination with GAZYVA® for one year. In second-line therapy (relapsed/refractory), it is given in combination with RITUXAN® for two years. VENCLEXTA® has a five-week ramp up to decrease risk of tumor lysis syndrome. It is recommended to take VENCLEXTA® with water. It is not recommended to take with grapefruit or starfruit. Kim reviewed the initiation checklist, which outlined baseline labs to be checked, medication reconciliation and comorbidities for which to screen, as these could indicate a dose modification. Genentech has put together a great patient starter kit, complete with patient education, water bottle, treatment calendar, and information on patient assistance programs available for commercially insured and uninsured patients.



What are Monoclonal Antibodies (mAb's)?

mAb's are drugs classified as Monoclonal Antibodies and they encompass many of the drugs we use in oncology, especially those that we store and mix for patients in our practice. Some examples are listed below:

- Rituximab (RITUXAN® and Biosims)
- Nivolumab (OPDIVO®)
- Trastuzumab (HERCEPTIN® and Biosims)
- Pembrolizumab (KEYTRUDA®)
- Ipilimumab (YERVOY®)
- Cetuximab (ERBITUX®)



PASSION FOR PATIENTS
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Cross-Training Pros!!

-  Satisfaction of Helping Cancer Patients
-  Career Advancement
-  Job Security
-  Flexible Work Environments
-  Advanced Oncology Clinical Knowledge



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