

# Genesis Cancer and Blood Institute Teams Up with American Oncology Network to Advance Quality Care, Improve Bottom Line

## About Genesis Cancer and Blood Institute

With two full-time centers and several community outreach clinics in Central Arkansas, Genesis Cancer and Blood Institute has spent more than 35 years providing care to thousands of patients in Hot Springs and the surrounding communities. The organization approaches care with all aspects of treatment in mind by encouraging positive attitudes, improving medicinal and nutritional therapies and maintaining a warm and comfortable setting.

Genesis physicians emphasize clinical trials and education and closely monitor results from trials performed domestically and internationally. Along with its dedication to research, Genesis Cancer and Blood Institute prioritizes community involvement. It works closely with Our Promise, a non-profit committed to helping local cancer patients with practical assistance, as well as the American Cancer Society and other charitable endeavors.



**35 years** of providing care

**5** physicians

**4** nurse practitioners

**2** cancer centers

**6** satellite locations

## THE CHALLENGE: Limited Resources

Like many provider groups in today's lean healthcare climate, Genesis Cancer and Blood Institute must optimize use of resources to maintain economies of scale and improve overall quality performance. With five physicians and four nurse practitioners covering the organization's two cancer centers and rural areas of Arkansas, Genesis faced challenges taking care delivery to the next level across its six satellite locations that are spread over a 200-mile radius.

"We all wore several hats," said Lesia Landers, MAP, practice administrator for Genesis. "Whenever a practice finds itself in this situation, it becomes more difficult to focus on high-level initiatives that can truly move the needle on performance and position an organization as a leader in the healthcare market."

For example, Genesis provided an on-call service

after hours for its patients. However, it didn't have the resources to fund an entire care management team that could assist with nutrition and family support services or manage advanced data collection.

"In order to provide additional services, we would need to increase our staffing and that would increase our financial responsibilities," said Landers, who is also a senior regional director for AON.

Adding to the need for increased staffing and financial outlays, Genesis Cancer and Blood Institute applied for and was accepted into the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) Oncology Care Model (OCM). It was one of just three clinics in Arkansas to be accepted into the OCM, which officially launched in 2016 and brought with it increased data collection needs.

## THE SOLUTION: Finding the Right Partner

To optimize the OCM patient care and to ramp up services without increasing patient costs, the leadership at Genesis made the decision to join the American Oncology Network (AON), which partners with independent practices to lessen administrative burdens and allows physicians to focus on their patients. Teaming with AON meant the center could offer patients an unprecedented level of care – including nutritional care and behavior services – without adding to its headcount. AON also provides full-time human resources, pharmacy, procurement, legal and other professionals, easing the administrative burden on Genesis' employees and allowing them to focus on their degree of expertise rather than, as Landers said, wearing so many hats.

Since partnering with AON, Dr. Divers said there have been a number of efficiency improvements, including managing patient copays and dealing with prescriptions, which used to take upwards of 30 minutes for the clinical staff.



“Now, on the oral medication side of the house, it's easy. We simply send prescriptions to the pharmacy and follow up immediately to confirm. We can also keep patients updated on the status of their medications,” said Dr. Divers. “Behind the scenes, AON has staff members dedicated to coordinating insurance claims. They can even help connect patients to financial assistance programs if needed.”

He added, “It's far more efficient for the patient, too, because medications through AON pharmacy



Before, our nurses were fielding calls as part of an already busy schedule. AON's care coordination team adds a layer of patient care on top of all that. That level of relationship is an added value.”

**Stephen “Fred” Divers, MD**  
Genesis Cancer and  
Blood Institute



are dispensed quickly and shipped directly to them. Meanwhile, pharmacists and nursing staff are available 24/7 to interact personally with each patient to explain the medications and proper usages as well as address any concerns.”

Another benefit of working with AON is that Genesis now has a highly experienced compliance and coding team at its disposal. Previously, Landers served as compliance officer along with the many other hats she wore. The practice would also have to bring in outside coders every two years to audit charts – something that now happens continuously.

AON is also making life easier for Genesis' physicians, who can now access comprehensive patient information faster than ever and from any location. For example, Dr. Divers recently conferred with a pathologist on the weekend while traveling, reviewing the results of a patient's bone marrow test that were submitted just 24 hours earlier. He was then able to connect with the patient immediately, accelerating the treatment plan.

“These are huge service benefits not seen elsewhere, and it can only happen with a fully integrated system,” said Dr. Divers. “Labs, radiology and other services – it is heads and tails above what we have historically been accustomed to from a quality and delivery point of view.”

## An Advantageous Practice Model

A fixture in the community for nearly three decades, Genesis Cancer and Blood Institute knew how integral it was to maintain its identity while under the AON umbrella. Retaining the Genesis name was as important as its physicians' ability to retain full autonomy over clinical decisions.

Adds Dr. Divers: "We've always tried to be good stewards of insurance and government dollars. AON reduces the economic and administrative burdens felt by most private oncology practices – but does so without reinventing the wheel. And we're still able to provide excellent care to our patients."

Its partnership with AON has also helped Genesis improve revenue cycle management, which in turn improved payer contracting.



Our patients still recognize us as the cancer experts in our region," Landers said. "That was a driving force behind joining with AON. They share our philosophy about keeping community oncology alive, maintaining practice independence and serving patients outside of hospital settings."



## Continued Revenue Growth

Since partnering with AON, Genesis has seen its revenue increase and now has a 6,500-square-foot PET center to increase patient volume.

## A Wise Decision

With AON, Genesis Cancer and Blood Institute has seen its revenue increase, its administrative burden lessen, and has grown to include seven physicians and six advanced practitioners as well as now has eleven locations. Most importantly, AON has helped Genesis maintain a high level of care for their patients and expand support services — all while keeping costs down.

"The level of management expertise alone would be out of reach for most small practices without a partner like AON. In fact, if I were going to recruit, these are the people I'd hire. I don't know of a better leadership team."



Working with AON allows small practices to function with the same breadth of services and expertise that are typically only seen at large metropolitan or academic practices," said Dr. Divers.

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