

# AON Partnership Empowers Hope Cancer Care of Nevada to Achieve its Mission of Providing Patient-Centered Care

## About Hope Cancer Care of Nevada

Hope Cancer Care of Nevada was established in 2009 by Raja S. Mehdi, MD, a Board-certified medical oncologist, to provide state-of-the-art cancer treatment and personally tailored programs designed to put the body, mind and spirit at ease as it heals. Since then, the center has expanded to two locations where Dr. Mehdi, three advanced practitioners and 34 support staff provide comprehensive and personalized care to every patient.

Hope Cancer Care’s mission of treating the whole patient is complemented by its philosophy combining leading medical treatments with the ability to focus solely on patients’ recovery – an approach that allows Hope Cancer Care’s highly trained staff to craft individualized treatment programs for each patient.



Established 2009

One physician

Three advanced practitioners

Two locations

## THE CHALLENGE: Prohibitive Costs, Complex Relationships

As business and care models evolved over the years, oncology practices like Hope Cancer Care of Nevada faced a growing number of increasingly complex obstacles that threatened their ability to remain independent. Among the most challenging were the cost of oncology drugs – biologics in particular – and managing relationships with insurance companies.

“Procurement of drugs was becoming almost prohibitive for smaller practices. And then, even if you managed to acquire the drugs for your patients, you had the complexities and headaches of dealing with insurance companies,” said Dr. Mehdi. “These two main issues led us to look for a practice management partner.”

The decision to seek out a network partner presented another challenge – finding the right philosophical fit. Dr. Mehdi noted that many networks had immediate disqualifiers, including being backed or owned by pharmaceutical or insurance companies.

“In my mind, those types of networks were not truly patient-centered,” he said. “They probably provide good care, but philosophically, it was not a good match for us.”



## THE SOLUTION: A Physician-led, Patient-centric Partner

Dr. Mehdi quickly determined the American Oncology Network (AON) checked all of Hope Cancer Care of Nevada's partnership boxes and joined the network in 2019. His decision was validated from the start, when his team flew to Florida to meet with AON's leadership.

One of the primary attractions of AON was its promise to let Hope Cancer Care's providers continue to practice oncology in the manner they feel is best for their patients – a promise that Dr. Mehdi says he sees no signs of being broken in the long-term.

Equally important, AON fulfilled another key requirement for Hope Cancer Care in that the benefits also extended to the non-clinical side of the house. Streamlined processes have helped ease administrative burdens, allowing the practice to keep pace with the rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

"The way that AON helped the practice navigate the changes made joining the network almost seamless," said Andrew Fisher, senior regional director of operations. "And now, there is less on their plates, which allows them to focus on other priorities. With the oncology and drug landscape constantly changing, the practice feels such relief having AON resources behind them, to take on the majority of that for them and guide the practice."

Dr. Mehdi says he also benefits from the business resources AON brings to the table. His attention is no longer divided between patient care and human



It was very attractive to me that the person at the helm is a physician who is still seeing patients and is still heavily engaged in patient care. They are obviously patient-centered," said Dr. Mehdi.



It's like I just became a real doctor all over again. I can stay completely focused on the patient because half my mind is no longer occupied with administrative issues," he said. "We are able to function more efficiently as individuals and be even more patient-centered than before. With AON, we may not do everything the same as before, but at the end of the day, the compass is pointing toward the patient."

**Raja S. Mehdi, MD**  
Hope Cancer Care of Nevada



resources, procurement and other activities that fall outside the clinical scope.

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Fisher adds that, since the merger with AON, the staff has the time, tools and other resources to really put the patient first. "They've had nothing but positive reviews from patients who came with them through the merger. All the way around, the best part is how patient-centered it is and how it has enabled them to do that wholeheartedly – not just with the best of intentions."

## THE OUTCOMES: Enhanced Services and Happy Patients

AON has opened numerous doors for Hope Cancer Care of Nevada with opportunities to provide expanded services that align well with its mission of patient-centric, whole-person care. One of those is AON's full-service centralized specialty pharmacy. Hope Cancer Care patients benefit not only from rapid access to cutting-edge medications but also from in-home delivery of their prescriptions in just days.

Patients frequently provide positive feedback, often focused on the outreach undertaken by the AON pharmacy team – even when that communication is to share that they are unable to fill a particular prescription.



“They’re always communicating with the patient, letting them know why and where they must transfer the prescription, giving the patient all the information needed to connect with that new pharmacy,” said Fisher. “Their dedicated AON representative is always in contact with them and looking at their numbers to make sure they’re not having any problems with any part of the pharmacy service, which is just great.”

The ability to enhance lab services was another benefit for Hope Cancer Care. Though their license exempts them from having full laboratory capabilities, the ability to offer patients on-site service draws rather than sending them to a laboratory service provider is a significant convenience.

Another value-add program is AON's Referral Base Management Program, which provides the structure and support needed for an effective physician liaison.

Despite their best efforts and intentions, previous attempts to implement a referral base management program had fallen short. AON's template has made all the difference.

Hope Cancer Care has launched several new patient advocacy initiatives with AON's support. The AON Cares Foundation and the establishment of a local CPAN Chapter in 2023 – the first on the west coast – demonstrate the practice's commitment to supporting patients and their families. The participation in the Nevada Oncology Society, a division of ACCC, and hosting an Annual Survivorship Event attended by over 250 patients and their family members further illustrate their dedication. Hope Cancer Care also organizes quarterly health fairs and vendor fairs and partners with organizations like Fighting Pretty, Breast Cancer Warriors of Las Vegas, and La Roche-Posay to offer robust support to patients, including patient support kits.

“We were able to tap into AON's experience, knowledge and expertise, which was significant. We've seen great results from the program,” said Dr. Mehdi.

One of the most immediate benefits Hope Cancer Care realized from its partnership with AON came at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. While many healthcare organizations were scrambling for supplies and figuring out how to continue providing patient care safely, AON was disseminating protocols, cleaning and disinfecting supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) to all its practices.

“AON was two steps ahead at all points during the pandemic,” said Fisher. “The information that they provided was extremely valuable and allowed the practice to notify their patients whenever a change occurred. AON made sure they always had enough PPE, even though their practice required new masks for every encounter. The level of support was absolutely astronomical.”



## Looking Ahead

As Hope Cancer Care of Nevada settles into another year as an AON practice, they are looking ahead at ways to optimize the relationship. The practice offers patients access to the American Oncology Cares Foundation (AON Cares), a nonprofit organization that provides financial support for essential living expenses such as rent or mortgage, utilities, transportation, and food, allowing them to focus on what matters most: their health and well-being.

They are also adopting AON's care coordination services and have added a clinical research division with a dedicated coordinator. Doing so, says Fisher, will provide additional support for patients without taking staff away from other core responsibilities.

Ultimately, Hope Cancer Care sees its relationship with AON as both enduring and mutually beneficial. One that gives them "a real shot at maintaining our independence and proving that community-based oncologists are still viable," said Dr. Mehdi.



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### Andrew Fisher

Senior Regional Director  
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