

# Cancer Care Delivery Research

## A Path to Improving the Quality of Oncologic Surgical Care

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### KEYWORDS

- Cancer care delivery research • Quality • Surgery
- Patient-centered outcomes research

### KEY POINTS

- Cancer care delivery research (CCDR) encompasses salient concepts from other well-established research approaches, including comparative effectiveness research, patient-centered outcomes research, implementation science, pragmatic trials, cost-effectiveness research, community-based participatory research, health services research, and stakeholder engagement.
- CCDR spans the spectrum of research from hypothesis testing to effectiveness research to policy development.
- Attributes pertinent to CCDR include saliency to stakeholders, clinician involvement throughout the study, use of high-quality measures, examination of causal pathways and active ingredients, and inclusion of diverse patients and settings.
- CCDR is an excellent approach for improvement in quality of oncologic care with specific attention paid to safety, effectiveness, patient-centered and timely care, efficiency, and equitability.

### OVERVIEW AND DEFINITION OF CANCER CARE DELIVERY RESEARCH

Providing high-quality cancer care to the 1.7 million individuals diagnosed with cancer annually in the United States is challenging.<sup>1</sup> The advances in screening, diagnosis, and treatment, which have improved cancer outcomes, have also introduced new

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complexities in delivering cancer care. In acknowledgment of this, an Institute of Medicine (IOM) report concluded that the cancer care delivery system is in crisis secondary to increasing demand, increasing complexity of advanced treatment, decreasing work force, and increasing costs.<sup>2</sup> Cancer care delivery research (CCDR) has emerged in response to these challenges.<sup>3</sup>

The ultimate goal of CCDR is to inform sustainable practice change that will “improve clinical outcomes, enhance the patient experience, and optimize value.”<sup>3</sup> As defined by the National Cancer Institute, CCDR is characterized by a multidisciplinary approach to exploring how “social factors, financing systems, organizational structures and processes, health technologies, and health care provider and patient behaviors affect access to cancer care, the quality and cost of cancer care, and ultimately the health and wellbeing of cancer patients and survivors.”<sup>3</sup> Although CCDR itself is an emerging field, it encompasses salient concepts from other well-established research approaches, including comparative effectiveness research, patient-centered outcomes research, implementation science, pragmatic trials, cost-effectiveness research, community-based participatory research, health services research, and stakeholder engagement (Fig. 1). Incorporating relevant aspects of these varied research approaches into CCDR study design facilitates rigorous evaluation of cancer care delivery in diverse settings.

CCDR also spans the continuum of research design from hypothesis generation (eg, case-control, observational studies) to effectiveness studies (eg, pragmatic clinical trials) to policy development and implementation science research. In general, CCDR tends to focus more on real-world effectiveness of an intervention, rather than efficacy under ideal conditions, to inform decision-making at the clinician, organization, and policy-level. Early case-control or observational studies may identify an area of need that requires further investigation, whereas stakeholder-engaged research generates possible solutions, effectiveness studies test these solutions, and implementation science assists with broader dissemination of the solutions across diverse settings. The latter component makes CCDR distinct from quality improvement because it focuses on the generalizability of outcomes in diverse populations as opposed to within a specific health care setting.



Fig. 1. Research approaches relevant to CCDR.

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