



The importance of group unity

# IN NUMBERS

by Tom Magoulis, Vice President, FloridaInfusion Services

## Alphabet Soup

CMS, CAP, ASP, MMA are all new acronyms being added to our vocabularies on a far too regular basis. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Competitive Acquisition Program (CAP), Average Selling Price (ASP) and Medicare Medicaid Act (MMA) are all important government programs (now law) aimed at changing the way you treat patients and do business. At the recent CMS "Open Door Forum" in which CMS took telephone calls from physicians, nurses, administrators and big pharma representatives, it was painfully obvious that there are still many more questions than answers regarding Average Selling Price. This begins in 2005, (right around the corner) and calculates your reimbursement at ASP plus 6 percent, while reducing your fee for service. The even more ambiguous Competitive Acquisition Program (CAP), establishes local/regional contractors bidding for your pharmaceutical needs in 2006.

Behind the scenes ASCO and other important groups such as ONS, large and small oncology practices, and big pharma are working feverishly to affect change. These groups are seeking to at least put a temporary hold on several provisions until the appropriate data can be accumulated and studied to see the real impact to cancer patients around the country. How this will shake out politically as the summer approaches and the presidential election campaigns heat up is just about anyone's guess.

It is clear that the group purchasing organization will continue to play an important role in big Pharma's thinking.

## Who to Trust?

As some specialty distributors and other GPO's scramble for position, attempting to not be left out of these processes for fear of their own financial loss, we believe it is more important than ever to support Oncology Associates and FloridaInfusion. Why? It is clear that the group purchasing organization will continue to play an important role in big Pharma's thinking and that it will become more important than ever to demonstrate to them that Oncology Associates has the power and support of its members to successfully achieve the goals they have established.

## Too Good to be True?

There will no doubt soon be efforts to splinter the Oncology Associates

membership with offers of money saving consolidations. Do not be easily swayed by those whose first and foremost goal is their own financial survival, attempting to achieve their goals on the backs of your hard work. Knowing and trusting the people you have been working with over the years can be a lot more profitable than offers sounding too good to be true from those with such single-minded ambition. We suggest that before you entertain any offers from competing distributors or GPO's you ask those involved their position on working with insurance companies and HMO's and how they feel about "brown bagging" as well as "what's in it for them."

As we have said in this column before, FloridaInfusion and Oncology Associates have not and will not enter into any deals with insurance companies and HMO's that would further usurp your authority as it relates to how you choose to take care of your patients or interfere with the way you do business.

At the end of the day, the struggle is only beginning. Each and every one of us can do more to make the powers that be aware that more time is needed and more objective study done before the acknowledged imperfect system that has worked relatively well for years is changed forever. **OA**

*Tom Magoulis is Vice President of FloridaInfusion Services. Contact him directly at [tmagoulis@floridainfusion.com](mailto:tmagoulis@floridainfusion.com) or 800-624-0152 with questions and comments.*