

Medical News

Public Affairs and Media Relations

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NOTE TO EDITORS: High-resolution b-roll video and images are available for download at <http://bit.ly/2vF6Swk>

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Expanded Medication Assistance Program Increases Access to Cancer Medications
State of Ohio and Ohio State's James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute partner to launch program aimed at reducing drug waste and assist patients with costs of cancer therapy

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Medical Assistance Program at [The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute](#) (OSUCCC – James) has helped more than 30,000 patients gain access to vital medications valued at more than \$500 million, and a new program expansion will further increase access to vital cancer therapies for patients with the greatest financial need.

“Financial toxicity is a very real concern for families facing a cancer diagnosis. As an institution, we want to do all that we can to reduce additional stressors for patients so they can focus on getting well,” explains [Julie Kennerly-Shah, PharmD](#), a pharmacist and associate director of pharmacy at the OSUCCC – James. “Our financial counselors work with patients so they don’t have to make decisions about whether they can afford potentially life-saving treatment.”

In February 2019 the pharmacy assistance program expanded with the implementation of a drug repository program that allows patients to donate no-longer-needed oral cancer therapy drugs for the benefit of other cancer patients through new state rules spearheaded by the [State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy](#) and OSUCCC – James.

“In cancer, it is quite common for patients to switch to a new medication or experience a medication dose reduction. As a result, we end up with a lot of wasted medication that must be disposed of,” explains Kennerly-Shah. “This new program allows patients to donate these unneeded medications for re-dispensing to patients in financial need through our existing hospital-based Medical Assistance Program.”

New rules adopted in November 2019 by the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy states donated medications must be within expiration dates, stored as prescribed and otherwise untampered with. Pharmacists will then go through an eight-point inspection of the drug to ensure that it is safe to re-dispense at a future date to patients in need. Previous rules allowed only for the collection of unopened medication that was dispensed for the prescribed patient but never picked up.

The cancer drug repository initiative is a new component of the overall Medical Assistance Program (MAP) at the OSUCCC – James. The MAP consult service was established to help

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“Ohio State has been a leader in medication-assistance programs and has taught many people across the country how to optimize various manufacturer programs and grant programming. We want to be an asset to other hospitals considering implementation of a cancer drug repository as well,” adds Kennerly-Shah. “Our hope is that our repository is a first step toward a much bigger solution long-term that could be modeled beyond our individual hospital and state.”

The OSUCCC – James is the first hospital in Ohio, and among the first in the United States, to launch a cancer drug repository program. The new cancer drug repository program is housed at the [OSUCCC – James Outpatient Pharmacy](#). The program will accept donations of unused medications from individual patients, pharmacies, hospitals and non-profit clinics to be re-dispensed to patients in treatment at the OSUCCC – James who cannot afford the cost of the medications. Patients interested in donating non-expired, no-longer-needed capecitabine or temozolomide should contact the OSUCCC – James Outpatient Pharmacy.

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About the OSUCCC – James

The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC – James) strives to create a cancer-free world by integrating scientific research with excellence in education and patient-centered care, a strategy that leads to better methods of prevention, detection and treatment. Ohio State is one of only 51 National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers and one of only a few centers funded by the NCI to conduct both phase I and phase II clinical trials on novel anticancer drugs. As the cancer program’s 356-bed adult patient-care component, The James is one of the top cancer hospitals in the nation as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* and has achieved Magnet® designation, the highest honor an organization can receive for quality patient care and professional nursing practice. With 21 floors comprising more than 1.1 million square feet, The James is a transformational facility that fosters collaboration and integration of cancer research and clinical cancer care.