Dear NCCN Distress Management Panel members,

On behalf of the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group (RTOG, now NRG Oncology) trial 0841 study team, I respectfully request the NCCN Distress Management Panel to review the attached publication for inclusion in the panel’s review of recommended procedures for distress screening.

Specific Changes: Update guidelines to recommend the administration of a brief measure of depression, in addition to the NCCN Distress Thermometer as a tool to screen for distress.

FDA Clearance: Not applicable.

Rationale:
As described in the publication submitted with this letter (Wagner et al. Cancer, 2017), we conducted a large trial to evaluate tools for screening for mood disorders among outpatients receiving radiotherapy for cancer. We administered several depression screening measures and used the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV (SCID) to define “caseness” with regard to the presence of current mood disorders. We found that the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) 2-item scale had good psychometric properties (sensitivity and specificity) for screening for mood disorders and was equivalent to the longer PHQ-9 item version. We also found that the NCCN Distress Thermometer (NCCN-DT) did not adequately detect cancer survivors with mood disorders. Based on this finding, we respectfully ask the NCCN Distress Management Panel to update recommendations to include a brief depression screening measure in addition to the NCCN-DT for psychosocial distress screening.

The following articles are submitted in support of this proposed change:


As a prior member of the NCCN Distress Management Panel, I gratefully acknowledge contributions of panel members to improving psychosocial care in oncology and wish to thank the panel for reviewing this submission.

Sincerely,

Lynne I. Wagner, Ph.D.
Professor
Director of Research and Clinical Integration, Cancer Prevention and Control, Wake Forest Comprehensive Cancer Center