

Enhancing Care for Women's Urologic Health: Advocacy for Urologic Care in Gynecologic Cancer Survivors

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Gynecologic cancer treatments save lives but often result in urologic complications, such as *incontinence, fistulas, and radiation cystitis*. These complications drastically affect quality of life, increase morbidity and mortality rates, and impose significant healthcare burdens.

Advocacy is essential to improve access to innovative treatments, expand multidisciplinary care, policy coverage of essential care.

Key Statistics

- 110,000+ women are diagnosed with gynecologic cancers annually in the U.S. ¹
- Significantly higher rates of urinary incontinence (73%), nocturia (46%), and urgency (83%) were found in cancer survivors following pelvic surgery or radiation for gynecologic cancer due to weakened pelvic floor muscles or nerve damage²
- Radiation cystitis impacts 60-80% of patients, while vesicovaginal fistulas occur in 2% ^{3,4}

References: 1. American Cancer Society. Cervical Cancer Statistics, Ovarian Cancer Statistics, Cervical Cancer Statistics, Endometrial Cancer Statistics. www.cancer.org. Published January 17, 2024.
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3. Jung Wook Huh, Jarred Tanksley, Junzo Chino, Christopher G. Willett, Mark W. Dewhirst; Long-term Consequences of Pelvic Irradiation: Toxicities, Challenges, and Therapeutic Opportunities with Pharmacologic Mitigators. *Clin Cancer Res* 1 July 2020; 26 (13): 3079–3090. <https://doi.org/10.1158/1078-0432.CCR-19-2744>
4. Chinthakanan O, Sirisreetreerux P, Saraluck A. Vesicovaginal Fistulas: Prevalence, Impact, and Management Challenges. *Medicina (Kaunas)*. 2023 Nov 3;59(11):1947. doi: 10.3390/medicina59111947. PMID: 38003996; PMCID: PMC10672783.



Research and Innovation

Proton Therapy and MRI-Guided Brachytherapy deliver precise, targeted therapy with less scatter to surrounding tissues, minimizing exposure to nearby urologic structures.

ADVOCACY ACTION

- Expand federal funding for clinical trials of advanced technology
- Mandate insurance coverage for cutting-edge therapies to ensure equitable access



Integrated Care

Survivorship clinics that integrate oncology, urology, physical therapy, and psychosocial support have shown to improve quality of life and functional outcomes for cancer survivors.

ADVOCACY ACTION

- Secure grants and policy funding to establish survivorship clinics at National Cancer Institute-designated centers



Patient/Provider Education

Provider training can increase referrals to urology, improving early diagnosis of complications, while public awareness campaigns can reduce stigma and encourage care-seeking behavior.

ADVOCACY ACTION

- Promote national campaigns focused on urologic complications
- Expand CME programs for primary care and oncology providers



Policy Reform

Insurance coverage expansion for innovative surgery techniques and uroprotective agents that reduce bladder toxicity can reduce complications while preserving cancer treatment efficacy.

ADVOCACY ACTION

- Lobby for federal/state legislative initiatives to include survivorship care and advanced urologic therapies in Medicare/Medicaid coverage