

ESTABLISHING AN INTEGRATIVE ONCOLOGY (IO) SERVICE: BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES



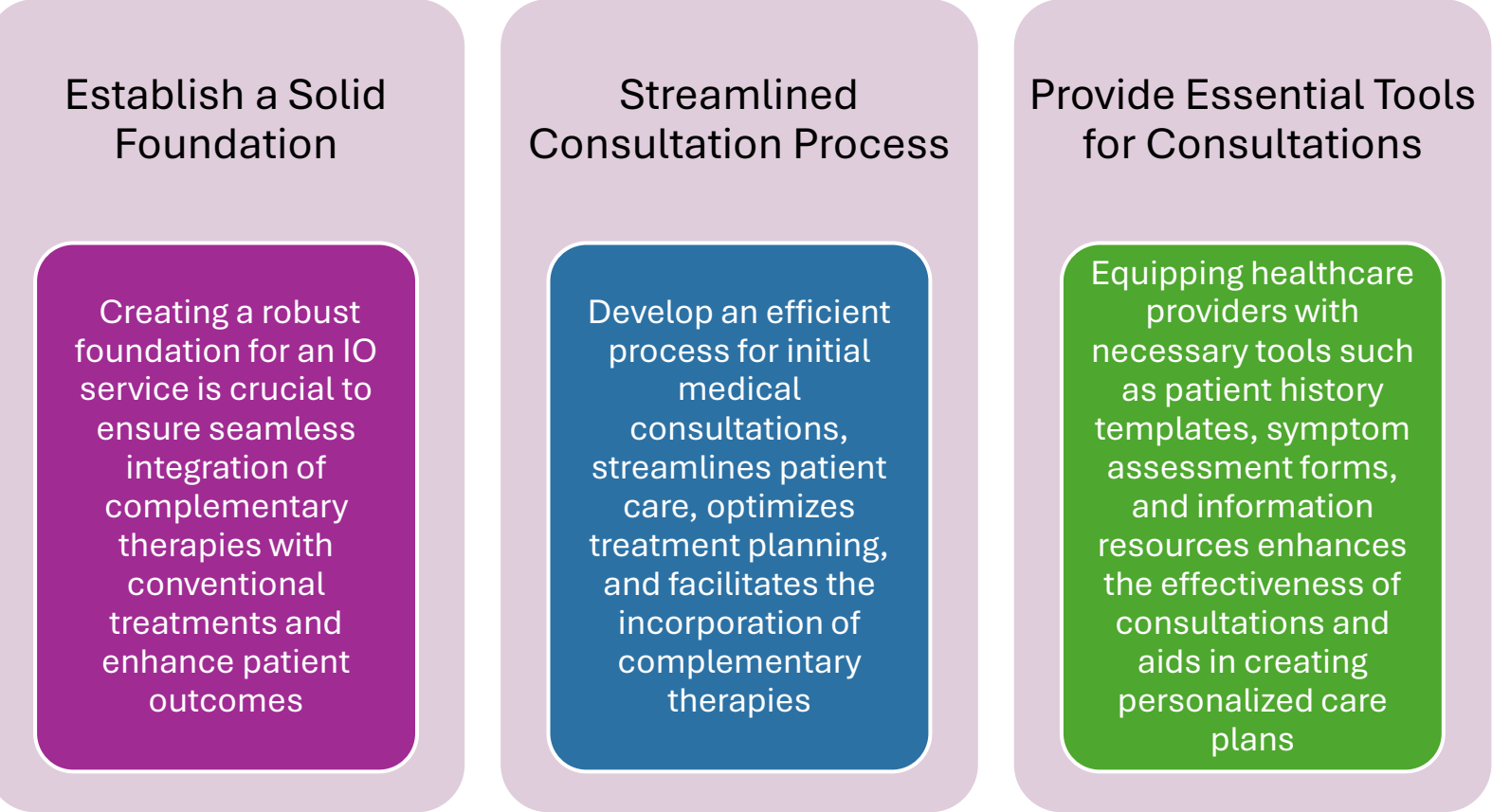
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Introduction

Over the last two decades, integrative oncology (IO) has seen exponential growth combining evidence-based complementary therapies with conventional treatments to improve the well-being and quality of life for individuals with cancer. The Society for Integrative Oncology's (SIO) Clinical Practice Committee (CPC) published a paper in 2024 on "Establishing an Integrative Oncology Service: Essential Aspects for Program Development."



Methods

Drawing upon the expertise of leaders in IO from the SIO's CPC representing a diverse group of individuals both from a geographical and clinical perspective, we explored barriers and opportunities in IO Center development as an extension of our previous work.



Objectives

To expand on the essential aspects of IO program development through a collaborative process by drawing on the global and clinical experience within SIO's Clinical Practice Committee focusing on:

- 1) Delineation of specific models of care delivery
- 2) Embedding research into programs
- 3) Identifying challenges and barriers for programmatic development

Models of Care Delivery in Integrative Oncology



We evaluated the strengths and challenges of each different model as it relates to the implementation of an IO program recognizing the importance of identifying a model that works best within the program's medical structure and unique needs.

5 models (as depicted) were identified for delivering IO based care.

Inpatient	Outpatient	Virtual	Hybrid	Community Based
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adapting therapies to inpatient deliveryTouch, mind/body, musicReduced stress and pain and improved emotional well-beingSpecific inpatient considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Integrated with existing careCollaboration with Oncology DepartmentsTherapies such as: acupuncture, massage, mind/body and nutrition→ improved QOLEducation is key	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expansive growth during pandemicVarious modelsContinuity, access and economic advantagesCritical role of infrastructure and resource sharingTechnology limitations, limited personal contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Merger of in person and virtualAdaptable format: inpatient-outpatient and community-academicCollaboration of services and providers for success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">High quality IO programs in community-based settingsParallels academic IO programsFinancial commitmentBridging the gap: education, community-based IO providers, virtual

Embedding Research into Clinical Practice

High quality, evidence-based research is pivotal for advancing the field of IO. Identifying and embedding research within a growing IO clinical program is a critical component and there are many essential elements to consider.

Diverse Study Designs	Pragmatic Research	Research Funding	Ethical Approval	Translating Research Results	Research Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Use of real-world clinical dataStudy design, leveraging data sourcesIncorporation of PROMs, QOL and patient preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bridging the gap between real world practice and evidence-based interventionsOffers continual assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">External sourcesInstitutional support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Informed consentIRB approvalData integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CommunicationInformation exchange leading to incorporation of evidence-based recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Academic and community-based programsResearchers and practitionersCo-designed interventionsIncreased community engagement

Challenges and Barriers to Sustainability

Economic Needs of Program Development

- Costs from establishing and maintaining a program
- Cost-effectiveness evaluations of IO based interventions
- Cost-savings from decreased hospitalizations, improved treatment adherence and symptom management

Funding Challenges

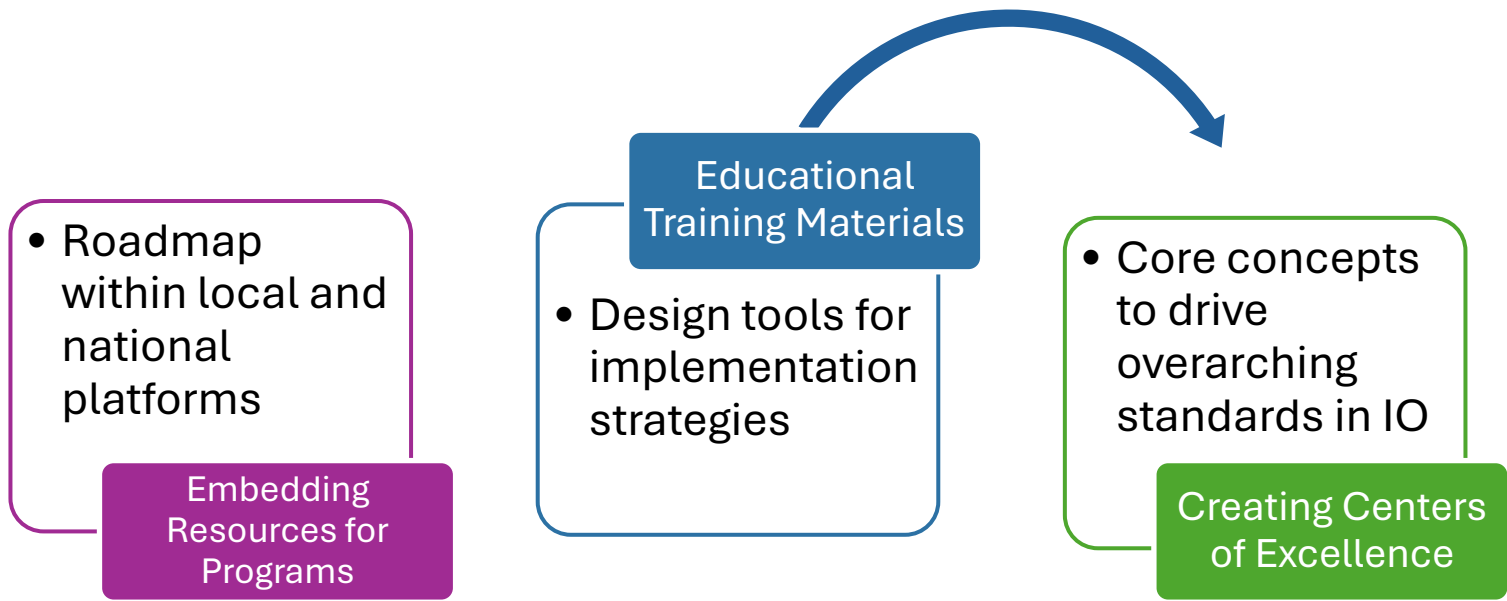
- Lack of established reimbursement models for many services
- Mechanisms vary
- Creative models
 - Group Medical Visits
- Collaborative partnerships with:
 - regulatory providers and healthcare policymakers to promote sustainability
 - philanthropy

Critical Need for Collaboration

- Attitudes and beliefs between providers
- Challenges include regulatory hurdles, financial constraints
- Bridging gaps:
 - open dialogue, educational sessions, multidisciplinary meetings
- Patient navigators, EMR, defined referrals

Conclusions/Future Directions

Globally, IO's role in both academic and community-based practices is growing rapidly. There remains an ongoing critical need to provide resources to assist programs in overcoming the challenges faced in implementation. Through a collaborative effort from the SIO Clinical Practice Committee, we developed a roadmap to assist in guiding and supporting new programs as they begin which will drive future educational tools and overarching IO standards of care.



References

J Lacey, et al. "Establishing an Integrative Oncology Service: Essential Aspects of Program Development." *Current Oncology Reports*. Vol 26, issue 3 2024.

