

Icon protocols save med schemes 27% in treatment costs, benefit passed onto the patient

According to the [International Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\)](#), an estimated 18,1 million new cancer cases were predicted worldwide for 2018, up from 14,1-million just six years ago.

Reasons for these significant increases are bad lifestyles - especially in developed countries where people adopt unhealthy, high-risk behaviours – and a growing, ageing population.

“The new reality is that [one in five men and one in six women](#) will develop cancer in their lifetime. And they’re most likely to be diagnosed for breast and prostate cancer, both of which are on the rise,” says Dr Ernst Marais, COO of Icon Oncology.

Making patients’ funds go further

With prevalence rates rapidly increasing, medical schemes are under extreme financial pressure to pay out to patients, especially as their member numbers dwindle in the face of a tough economic environment. “Costs need to be cut without compromising on care”, says Marais.

A viable and proven remedy to this situation is an industry-wide switch to value-based care (VBC) that Icon Oncology champions. It is an alternative framework focusing on what patients value and allocates resources to improving health outcomes. This is in contrast to the widespread fee-for-service model which remunerates oncologists for volume rather than patient outcomes.

Using the Icon protocols means patients can extract more value from their available medical funds, as when the costs are reduced by 27% it can potentially be utilised by medical schemes to give access to effective, expensive treatments that previously were not accessible in the South African market.

Furthermore, recent research¹ published by Icon shows that patients treated using evidence-based treatment protocols resulted in cost efficiencies while showing no evidence of inferior care with improved surrogate endpoints for outcomes. The Icon solution shows a significant reduction in costs compared to scenarios when no protocols applied. This means patients received quality, appropriate care at a significantly reduced cost.

Accessing treatment

¹ Cost impact of protocol compliance for cancer treatment plans in the private healthcare environment: E Marais, M.Izzert and L.Kotze. As published in the African Journal of Clinical and Outcomes Research.

“Being treated by Icon protocols means patients gain access to additional care, which otherwise might not have been financially possible. This could include additional radiation treatment at the Icon Oncology Centre in Bloemfontein for instance,” says Marais.

At the Centre patients gain access to a fully equipped radiation facility that offers 3D conformal and IMRT (Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy) treatment options. This ensures that the beam of radiation can be shaped to the size and depth of the tumour sparing health tissue around the tumour.

This unit is fully accredited by the Icon network and is contracted to medical aids. “Our qualified Radiotherapists take patients through the whole process, from the planning scans to the delivery of treatment, ensuring that the patient is comfortable with the whole radiotherapy treatment process,” says Marais. “We also have a qualified Oncology sister and an Oncology social worker, who in conjunction with the patient’s oncologist and Radiotherapy team, will function as multi-disciplinary teams to assist the patient while they navigate their oncology journey.”

Putting the patient at the centre of their care

By [2040 it is predicted](#) by IARC that there will be as many as 29-million new cases per year globally. As such it is essential that patients gain access to as much cancer care as they can afford, and they can further increase this access when being treated using Icon’s evidence-based treatment protocols.

“The future of private healthcare will be driven by new generation models such as value-based care. Icon Oncology is proof that the model works by putting the patient at the centre of their care, thus reducing wastage and costs while improving efficiency and efficacy for all,” concludes Marais.

ENDS

About Icon: Icon Oncology is part of the recently rebranded Medical Specialist Holdings (MSH) (Pty) Ltd. Today Icon Oncology represents subsidiaries, Icon Radiotherapy, Icon Network and Icon Managed Care. Across its business, Icon is the South African pioneer of Value-Based Care (VBC) in cancer treatment, a viable and much-needed alternative to the traditional fee-for-service model. Its provider-driven protocols have been proven to significantly improve efficacy and efficiencies and it is practiced by oncologists within its broad network, representing more than 80% of practising oncologists. VBC is effective as it places the patient at the centre ensuring the right care at the right time and the right price. The Icon team also developed e-Auth®, a proprietary software platform that can grant oncologists real-time authorisation of Icon approved treatment plans. Together, VBC and the e-Auth platform address burning issues associated with oncology, namely rising costs and burdensome administration.

