

Highlights from NCCN's 2026 Annual Conference for Cancer Care Providers

NCCN conference participants shared cutting-edge research and discussed issues like rising cancer rates in younger people

April 8, 2026 By National Comprehensive Cancer Network

ORLANDO, FL [April 1, 2026] — The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)—a nonprofit alliance of leading cancer centers—brought together more than a thousand oncology professionals at the [NCCN 2026 Annual Conference](#) in Orlando, Florida, with hundreds more joining virtually. This year's event featured educational sessions on the latest breakthroughs in cancer prevention and treatment, clinical guidelines updates, guidance for improving cancer center operations, plus panel discussions on critical issues in care delivery.

"We gain so much from gathering together to share ideas and best practices, make new connections, and forge new collaborations," said Crystal S. Denlinger, MD, CEO, NCCN.

"Conference attendees tell us they feel a renewed energy and hope for the future after discussing how cancer care has advanced over the past year. This helps us all serve our patients better and ensure they experience the best care and outcomes possible."

The New Face of Cancer: Supporting Younger Adults Across the Care Continuum

The conference opened with a plenary session exploring the causes of an alarming rise in cancer incidence in people under 50, and how providers should adjust to this new reality. The panel members agreed that there are likely several contributing factors, including diet and lifestyle, microbiome, and environmental hazards.

Speakers noted that scheduling and financial toxicity are particularly troublesome for younger people who are at a different stage in their life and career when they embark on their cancer journey. Some may have complicated commitments due to young children while others may not be thinking about building a family yet or be aware of how treatment may impact fertility. Their experiences going through therapy can be isolating from both their peers—who are living very different lives—and their fellow patients, who are typically older.

The hope is that these patients go on to live for many years, making it particularly important to

take long-term side effects from treatment into account. At the same time, adolescents and young adults are often diagnosed at a later stage due to being below the age threshold for screening, rarity making symptoms less likely to be identified, plus an increased likelihood of a genetic component. According to the panel, more education is needed within the health care community and beyond, to better prepare survivors and health care systems to achieve optimal results.

“All patients, but particularly early-onset adults, should have a full team providing multidisciplinary, holistic care,” said panel moderator Christopher Lieu, MD, University of Colorado Anschutz Cancer Center, Vice-Chair of the NCCN Board of Directors. “Adolescents and young adults with cancer have unique challenges and rely on supportive services to ensure good quality of life through treatment and for years to come.”

The speakers noted that the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines) for [Adolescents and Young Adults \(AYA\)](#) are a helpful resource on this topic.

Delivering Cancer Care Worldwide: Current Realities and Future Strategies

A second plenary session tackled cancer care around the world, with a focus on the growing burden and new opportunities to address it. The panel pointed out that cancer rates are rising dramatically and disproportionately, with the vast majority of deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). However, only 5% of the world’s cancer funding is spent on these regions.

Speakers highlighted that there are numerous opportunities to make a significant difference with a big return on investment. Those include standardizing treatments worldwide while upscaling prevention—such as HPV-vaccination uptake and access to screening. But there are new challenges from funding cuts that undermine progress, plus siloed efforts that seek to reinvent the wheel. Staffing limitations and regional disparities in resources contribute to the burden.

“Well-conceived programs can make an incredible difference in these settings,” said panelist Anu K. Agrawal, MD, Vice President, Global Cancer Support, American Cancer Society (ACS). “A lot of people are very interested in helping; we just need them to work together. We must move swiftly to action and support cancer-related policies with practical resources.”

Speakers celebrated the collaboration between the African Cancer Coalition, ACS, and NCCN for creating and maintaining the International Adaptations of the NCCN Guidelines for Sub-Saharan Africa as one example of a program that is finding success. The panel also showcased the NCCN Guidelines Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Editions, a collaborative effort with the Ministry of National Guard—Health Affairs (Saudi Arabia). Learn more about these, and other initiatives, at [NCCN.org/global](https://www.nccn.org/global).

Operational Excellence in Cancer Care

New this year for in-person attendees, NCCN offered an educational track on best practices for oncology program operations. It included sessions on the role of guidelines in addressing systemic and practical challenges to care, optimizing academic/community collaborations, artificial intelligence (AI) innovation and governance, and policy insights.

“The [NCCN Guidelines](#) were downloaded more than 18 million times last year. That is a sign that people want to do the right thing and provide the best care that they can,” said Lawrence N. Shulman, MD, MACP, FASCO, Abramson Cancer Center at the University of Pennsylvania, Member of the NCCN Best Practices Committee and Policy Advisory Group. “New advances have benefited our patients, who are living longer, which is great news. But they stay in our practices longer, and together with the growing number of new cancer patients in the U.S., our oncology work force is ever more strained. We need to make care more efficient with improved electronic health records (EHRs), other technologies, and reducing administrative burdens.”

New Research and More

The conference featured more than 300 original research abstracts, covering topics such as:

- Best Practices
- Bioinformatics/IT
- Case Studies
- Clinical Oncology
- Correlative/Genomic
- Epidemiology/Risks/Prevention
- Outcomes
- Pre-Clinical Oncology
- Quality Improvement
- Trials in Progress

In-person attendees had an opportunity to embark on expert-guided tours through both days of posters. Top abstracts on topics like “Integrating Print-to-Web Outreach into Mammography Workflows to Promote Lung Cancer Screening: A Feasibility Study,” “A Phase I Study of Safety and Immunogenicity of Surviving Long Peptide Vaccine (SurVaxM) in Patients with Metastatic Neuroendocrine Tumors (NETs),” and “Increasing Equitable Adherence to Annual Lung Cancer Screening and Diagnostic Surveillance: A Pragmatic Factorial Trial” were presented as talks during

a live session. Past [NCCN Foundation Young Investigator Award](#) winners presented talks on topics including: “Evolving Toward Precision Oncology in Osteosarcoma” and “Characterizing the Peripheral T-cell Repertoire in Patients with Unresectable Melanoma Treated with IO102-IO103 and Nivolumab-relatlimab.”

The posters included an abstract from Taneal D. Carter, DHSc, MPA, MS, Senior Manager of the NCCN Cancer Care Equity Program, et. al., on a pilot project utilizing the [Health Equity Report Card](#) to assess and promote equitable practices in community care settings, through funding from the Alliance for Equity in Cancer Care.

Conference participants learned about clinical guideline updates for gastrointestinal, genitourinary, gynecologic, hematologic, and skin cancers, as well as case study discussions for breast and non-small cell lung cancers. Sessions also featured information on managing immune checkpoint inhibitor toxicities, clinical applications and emerging trends in AI technology, and other topics.

Next year, the NCCN Annual Conference moves to San Diego, California, for the first time. Save the dates: Friday, March 19 – Sunday, March 21, 2027. Visit [NCCN.org/conference](https://nccn.org/conference) to learn more.

[This announcement](#) was originally published April 1, 2026, on the National Comprehensive Cancer Network website.