Cancer touches the lives of millions worldwide each year. This is reflected not only in well-publicized mortality statistics but also in the profound—though much more difficult to measure—effects of cancer on the health-related quality of life, economic status, and overall well-being of patients and their families. In 2001, the US National Cancer Institute established the Cancer Outcomes Measurement Working Group to evaluate the state of the science in measuring the important and diverse impacts of this disease on individuals and populations. The findings and recommendations of the working group’s 35 internationally recognized members are reported in *Outcomes Assessment in Cancer*, lucidly written and accessible to both researchers and policy makers in academia, government, and industry. This volume provides the most penetrating yet practical discussion to date of alternative approaches for comprehensively measuring the burden of cancer and the effectiveness of preventive and therapeutic interventions.

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Contents

List of contributors  ix
Acknowledgments  xiii

1 Introduction to Outcomes Assessment in Cancer
Joseph Lipscomb, Ph.D., Carolyn C. Gotay, Ph.D., and Claire Snyder, M.H.S. (The Editors)

Health-related quality of life in cancer: general concepts and generic measures

2 Definitions and conceptual models of quality of life
Carol Estwing Ferrans, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N.

3 Assessing health status and quality of life of cancer patients: the use of general instruments
Jennifer Erickson, Ph.D.

4 The roles for preference-based measures in support of cancer research and policy
David H. Feeny, Ph.D.

Assessing health-related quality of life during treatment

5 Quality of life in breast cancer: what have we learned and where do we go from here?
Patricia A. Ganz, M.D., and Pamela J. Goodwin, M.D., M.Sc.
Measuring quality of life in prostate cancer: progress and challenges
Mark S. Litwin, M.D., M.P.H., and James A. Talcott, M.D., S.M.

The science of quality-of-life measurement in lung cancer
Craig C. Earle, M.D., M.Sc., and Jane C. Weeks, M.D.

Treatment for colorectal cancer: impact on health-related quality of life
Carol M. Moinpour, Ph.D., and Dawn Provenzale, M.D., M.S.

Instruments to measure the specific health impact of surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy on cancer patients
Michael J. Barry, M.D., and Janet E. Dancey, M.D.

Assessing health-related quality of life across the cancer continuum

Short-term outcomes of chemoprevention, genetic susceptibility testing, and screening interventions: What are they? How are they measured? When should they be measured?
Jeanne S. Mandelblatt, M.D., M.P.H., and Joe V. Selby, M.D., M.P.H.

Evaluating quality of life in cancer survivors
Brad Ziedack, Ph.D., M.S.W., and David Cellis, Ph.D.

Assessing health-related quality of life at end of life
Betty R. Ferrell, Ph.D., FA.A.N.
22 Applications of item response theory to improve health outcomes assessment: developing item banks, linking instruments, and computer-adaptive testing 445
Ronald K. Hambleton, Ph.D.

23 Subscales and summary scales: issues in health-related outcomes 465
Mark Wilson, Ph.D.

Assessing the economic impact of cancer

24 On the definition and measurement of the economic burden of cancer 480
Mark C. Hornbrook, Ph.D.

25 Cost-effectiveness analysis in cancer: toward an iterative framework for integration of evidence from trials and models 503
Bernie J. O’Brien, Ph.D.

Research and policy implications

26 Data for cancer outcomes research: identifying and strengthening the empirical base 522
Carolyn C. Gotay, Ph.D., and Joseph Lipscomb, Ph.D.

27 Use of health-related quality of life measures by industry and regulatory agencies in evaluating oncology therapies 550
Dennis A. Brevicki, Ph.D.

28 Reflections on COMWG findings and moving to the next phase 568
Carolyn C. Gotay, Ph.D., Joseph Lipscomb, Ph.D., and Claire Snyder, M.H.S.

Invited papers

Invited Paper A The world of outcomes research: yesterday, today, and tomorrow
Bert Spilker, Ph.D., M.D.

Invited Paper B The ten Ds of health outcomes measurement for the twenty-first century
Colleen A. McHorney, Ph.D., and Karen F. Cook, Ph.D.

Invited Paper C The use of cognitive interviewing techniques in quality of life and patient-reported outcomes assessment
Gordon B. Willis, Ph.D., Bryce B. Reeve, Ph.D., and Ivan Barefsky, Ph.D.

Invited Paper D Industry perspective regarding outcomes research in oncology
Kati Capley-Merriman, M.S., M.B.A., Joseph Jackson, Ph.D., J. Gregory Boyer, Ph.D., Joseph C. Cappelletti, Ph.D., M.P.H., Robert DeMarinis, Ph.D., Joseph DeCruze, M.P.H., R.Ph., M. Haim Erder, Ph.D., Jean Paul Gagnon, Ph.D., Lesa Garrison, Ph.D., Kathleen Condek, Ph.D., Kim A. Heithoff, Sc.D., Tom Hughes, Ph.D., David Miller, Ph.D., Margaret Rothman, Ph.D., Nancy Santanello, M.D., M.S., Richard Willke, Ph.D., and Bruce Wong, M.D.

Index 639
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We note that the work of each COMWG member who was not a US government employee was supported under an NCI contract; participation by Federal members was regarded as an “official duty” activity. The National Cancer Institute also provided limited financial support for research assistance for any COMWG member requesting it. Non-Federal authors of the invited chapters were likewise supported under NCI contract, except the members of the PhRMA Health Outcomes Committee, whose efforts were contributed. Consistent with the operating principles of an NCI-approved working group (see Chapter 1), the views expressed in each chapter
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are solely those of the author(s) and are not intended to reflect working group opinions or consensus positions. Chapters authored by one or more Federal employees were subject to internal clearance review by each author's agency to evaluate factual accuracy and editorial quality. These internal review policies applied to both working group and invited chapters.

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We note with great sadness the untimely passing in early 2004 of COMWG member Bernie O’Brien, Ph.D., an internationally recognized health economist whose contributions to the profession are well exemplified by, but extend far beyond, the superb chapter he produced for this volume.

Over the months since the COMWG began, cancer touched our lives through family, friends, and colleagues. We have seen first-hand the impact on patients and their loved ones. It is our sincere hope that the work presented here will stimulate additional research and application to improve the lives of all those affected by cancer.