

Community Cancer Center Increases Patient Capacity and Operational Efficiency By Balancing Patient Workloads

Piedmont Cancer Institute (PCI) is a community oncology organization in the Atlanta market. They first implemented the **AI-powered OncoSmart Platform, from Smirta Innovations**, in 2023 at one 26-chair clinic, thereafter expanding its use across its seven clinics and 102 infusion chairs.



Before OncoSmart, PCI faced several recurring challenges:

- **Uneven patient flow** caused consistent midday peaks.
- **Nursing teams operating at or above capacity** during busy periods.
- **Manual, labor-intensive** nurse assignments.
- **Subjective assignment practices** that created perceptions of unfairness.
- **Infusion appointments driven by physician** openings rather than chair capacity.
- **Pharmacy backlogs and delays** during surges in patient order volume.

Improved Workflows Across Facilities

By incorporating key variables into the assignment logic, including treatment mix, cycle timing, research patient status, and more labor-intensive scenarios such as cryotherapy, OncoSmart enabled PCI to eliminate reactive, manual decision-making and standardize processes across all facilities. Collectively, these changes reduced the manual burden on infusion team leaders, and nurses now have real-time visibility into patient assignments and scheduling changes, enabling them to respond more effectively throughout the day.

“ *OncoSmart has made the assignment process fairer and less biased, and it has smoothed out our days for both nursing and pharmacy. It has also helped us reduce manual work, improve operational consistency, and optimize care for more patients with the staff and resources we had.* ”

Stephanie Braatz
Chief Clinical Officer
Piedmont Cancer Institute

Improved day-to-day operations in several key areas:

- **Smoothed patient flow** across the day.
- **Reduced midday clustering** for nursing and pharmacy.
- **Decreased manual “day closing”** workarounds.
- **Simplified scheduler** workflows.

OncoSmart also enabled schedulers to offer patients optimized appointment times that work for all parties rather than asking, “When do you want to come?” Insights from the OncoSmart dashboards also enabled improved design of physician scheduling templates, better distributing oncologist appointments throughout the day. This helped maximize the number of scheduled treatments while respecting provider constraints and preferences.

Clinical Benefits

Clinically, PCI saw better flow and less stress in the infusion room. OncoSmart also supported more equitable assignments, helping PCI develop more nurses to handle complex patients rather than repeatedly relying on the same experienced staff members.

Clinical gains included:

- ✓ **Shorter patient wait** times.
- ✓ **More equitable** patient-to-nurse assignments.
- ✓ **Less pressure on nurses** during peak periods.
- ✓ **Better support for developing nurse capabilities** across the team.

Operational Benefits

OncoSmart provided PCI leadership with visibility into patient-to-nurse ratios and physician schedules across clinics, facilitating constructive change-management conversations. It also enabled them to distinguish whether issues were due to staffing shortages, patient load imbalances, or leadership decisions.

Operational gains included:

- ✓ **Less manual assignment and reactive operational work** for team leaders.
- ✓ **Better visibility into nurse, pharmacy, and physician** workload across clinics.
- ✓ **Consistent scheduling logic** across all clinics.

Financial Benefits

Aside from realizing a rapid ROI, the long-term benefit was the ability to increase patient volume without increasing staff, thanks to making better use of chairs and nurses throughout the day.

Financial gains included:

- ✓ **6-7X ROI** in year one.
- ✓ **Higher patient volume** with existing staff.
- ✓ **Improved chair utilization** throughout the day.

Piedmont Cancer Institute's experience shows that optimizing the use of existing patient care resources and capacity involves more than efficiently filling chairs. By smoothing patient flow, scheduling and assignment work, and improving visibility into nurse, pharmacy and physician workload and capacity, PCI strengthened clinical operations. PCI grew without adding resources. Their experience demonstrates how AI and a data-driven approach can improve day-to-day performance and long-term business health.

