Community Oncology Alliance (COA) Statement on COVID-19 Vaccinations and the Health Care Workforce

With the recent surge in the COVID-19 Delta variant strain of the virus, the Board of Directors of the Community Oncology Alliance (COA) very strongly believes that all community oncology health care staff should be vaccinated. How and if vaccinations are mandated, and how policies are implemented, including ongoing COVID testing, are obviously the responsibility of each community oncology practice.

Although vaccination of the oncology staff cannot prevent all exposures to the virus, it significantly minimizes the chances of spreading COVID to the most vulnerable immunocompromised patients. And the first responsibility of community oncology practices and health care professionals is to protect their patients and provide them with the highest quality, most affordable, and most accessible cancer care, which are the hallmarks of community oncology.

The available COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. With nearly two billion fully vaccinated individuals worldwide, including almost 172 million in the U.S. alone, there is clear data to show the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccination. With one fully FDA approved vaccine and others anticipated shortly, the Board of Directors of COA very strongly believes that all community oncology health care staff should be vaccinated to protect themselves, their patients, colleagues, families, and the general public.

Independent, community oncology practices have done a Herculean job of keeping their staff and facilities open for patients during the pandemic while hospitals have been overrun with COVID-19 cases. This has allowed practices to continue to be the foundational treatment infrastructure for Americans with cancer. From the onset of the COVID public health emergency, COA has been a resource for practices to share operational and clinical best practices in order to keep taking care of patients. Early on, COA petitioned the federal and state governments to allow practices to administer the vaccines to their patients. COA continues to act as a resource for all community oncology practices to share information and ideas in minimizing the spread of COVID within their facilities. COA and its community oncology practices have led the way on the vaccination issue.