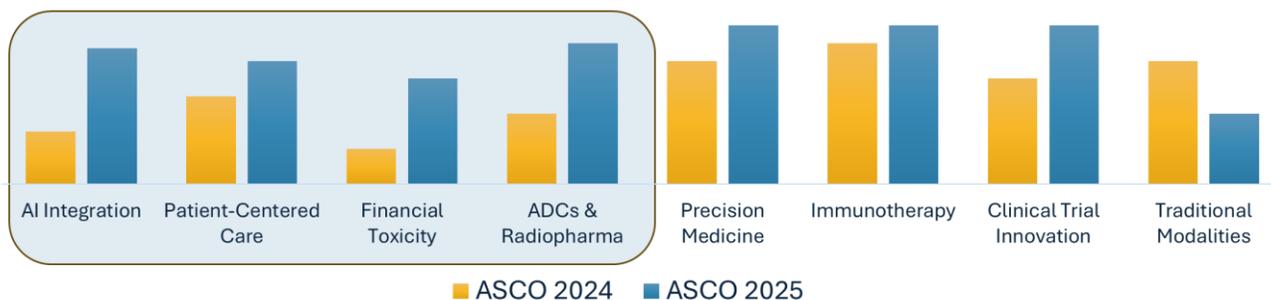




ASCO 2025: A behavioral lens on innovation

ASCO 2025 marked a pivotal moment in oncology – not just for the science, but for how that science connects with people – and this year’s conference revealed a powerful shift toward more patient-centered, equitable, and behaviorally informed cancer care.

ASCO Topic Summary



Patient-centered Innovation

From CAR-T therapies in solid tumors to AI-powered diagnostics, ASCO 2025 emphasized how innovation must translate into real-world benefits.



The focus was not just on clinical efficacy, but on how treatments impact patients’ lives—emotionally, physically, and financially.

AI as a human-centered tool

AI was everywhere—from clinical trial design to ambient listening in clinics—but its most impactful use cases were those that supported, rather than replaced, human decision-making:

- Developing AI evaluations of biomarkers (for example, HER2) to reduce variability and lead to improved evaluation of patient eligibility for treatment
- Use in drug development: Outcome prediction, external controls, dosage optimization and formation selection
- AI-based interpretation of a digitized frozen section of brain tumor tissue to provide rapid molecular diagnosis during neurosurgery

Patient centered care - redefining value in oncology

With the rise of antibody-drug conjugates, radiopharmaceuticals, and precision therapies, ASCO 2025 signaled a shift in how value is defined in oncology. It’s no longer just about survival—as value shifts to include tolerability, quality of life, and long-term outcomes, behavioral insights can help oncologists adapt their clinical decision-making, communication, and perceptions of success.





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Reframing clinical value

Shift mental models: Oncologists must view value in terms of patient outcomes and lived experiences – not only tumor response or survival curves. Emotional, financial, and social dimensions of care are now central to treatment planning.



Improve how oncologists convey value to patients

Shared decision-making: Shared decision-making is not a checkbox—it’s a mindset shift toward partnership. Equip oncologists with tools to elicit patient perspectives and integrate them into their own treatment planning.

Behavioral insight in action – financial toxicity

Compared to 2024 emphasis on financial toxicity skyrocketed this year. Financial toxicity (FT) is a wide-ranging term that encompasses the costs that patients and their families must manage after the diagnosis of cancer, which can lead to significant impacts on personal and family budgets.

(Source: [Financial Toxicity – PMC](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7332125/), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7332125/> Sessions on FT, treatment adherence, and shared decision-making highlighted the importance of uncovering the ‘why’ behind cancer patient behaviors.

There is growing recognition of FT as a critical health issue – comparable in its impact to physical toxicity and affecting patients’ quality of life, treatment adherence, and long-term outcomes, with a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations. Key topics at ASCO 2025 included discussion of the Oncologists’ role in enabling FT, gaps in FT assessment, patient education on financial aspects, and adequate support of patients facing financial challenges.

Some real-world examples of FT:

- During pediatric CAR-T therapy, 94% of families reported financial toxicity at baseline
- In people with melanoma receiving adjuvant therapies, at 12 months – 50% reported reduced working hours; 36% experienced financial toxicity
- Among survivors of childhood cancer, financial hardship is associated with non-adherence to a healthy lifestyle
- Many breast cancer patients say they were not asked about financial stressors, nor did they receive assistance for these stressors



Conclusion

ASCO 2025 wasn’t just about what’s next in oncology—it was about how we get there, and who we bring with us. For those of us at the intersection of science and behavior, the message was clear: The future of cancer care is not only innovative—it’s human.