Significance and Background
Over 70,000 new cases of bladder cancer are diagnosed yearly. Bladder cancer is associated with a significant financial, social and healthcare burden for individual patients and society. Many of these patients are from medically underserved communities that do not have direct access to support groups. Oncology nurses play a unique role in the development and facilitation of support groups. A bladder cancer support group was established to meet this unmet need. In addition, innovative strategies that support bladder cancer research through awareness functions, seminars and fund raising activities are incorporated.

Objectives
• Identify the structural and process components to develop a bladder cancer support group.
• Describe innovative ways to measure support group outcomes.

Interventions
The bladder cancer support group structure was established and defined by an advisory board and executive committee. A letter of invitation was sent to patients with the diagnosis of bladder cancer seen in the clinic over a twelve month period. Select patients were chosen to assist in leading this group. Meeting topics were defined through a patient survey. The intended outcome is to improve bladder cancer survivor’s quality of life. Strategies include formal meetings and newsletter communication to survivors and their families’, and other supports that provide comfort and education through the journey. Early validation of the success of this program is evidenced by the first meeting’s attendance being one third of the patients invited. Subsequent meetings have seen equal success.

Evaluation
Program effectiveness is evaluated quarterly. The advisory group assesses cultural issues, language barriers, and fundraising options. Attendees receive a survey to assess the needs of the group, as well as a five question Likert survey to evaluate their perception of the group’s effectiveness. An interdisciplinary team of nurses, physicians, and nurse practitioners provide input through ongoing assessment of clinical, emotional, psychosocial, and financial issues identified in the clinical setting.

Summary
Bladder cancer support groups are important in addressing unmet needs in many communities. The success of this program is already providing a model for other underserved patient groups within our Cancer Institute. Future plans include outreach to additional hospitals in the surrounding area, identification of avenues to raise money for research and development of social media.