

ACCC/ONS 4th Annual Policy Institute

Oncology Nurses Make Their Voices Heard on Capitol Hill

Forty oncology nurses and other members of the oncology care team learned how to be powerful and effective advocates for cancer care services at the ACCC/ONS 4th Annual Policy Institute held April 9-11, 2003, in Washington, D.C. Aventis and Ortho Biotech

Products, L.P., were the sponsor's of this year's policy institute.

Conference attendees visited Capitol Hill to deliver two important messages. First, Congressmen were asked to support the Beneficiary Access to Care Act of 2003 (H.R. 1032) introduced by Rep.

Clay Shaw (R-Fla.) that would ensure continued patient access to cancer drugs in the hospital outpatient setting.

Second, Congressmen were asked to appropriate between \$175 million and \$250 million to the

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Christine Polluck, legislative assistant for Rep. Clay Shaw (R-Fla.), addresses attendees at the ACCC-ONS 4th Annual Policy Institute.



In Sen. Dick Durbin's (D-Ill.) office, congressional fellow Susan Herald (center) takes notes while meeting with John Hylton (left), administrator, Rush Prebyterian/St. Luke's Hospital in Chicago, and Beth Olson, R.N., clinical resource coordinator, Hematology and Oncology, also at Rush Prebyterian/St. Luke's Hospital.



Rep. Mike Doyle (D-Pa.), (second on right) meets in his Capitol Hill office with (far left) Karen Yuhas, manager, clinical and financial analysis, Radiation Oncology Department, UPMC Cancer Centers in Pittsburgh; Leonard Mafrika, M.B.A., C.A.E., executive director of communications and publisher, Oncology Nursing Society; Susan Weiss Behrend, R.N., M.S.N., AOCN®, clinical nurse specialist at Fox Chase Cancer Center, Philadelphia; and Layla Ballon, COO at ONS. James Sharp, legislative director for Doyle, is seated next to the congressman.



Katherine A. Finstuen (on left), nurse manager-BMT/Leukemia Outpatient Clinic, Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland, and ONS President Judy E. Lundgren, R.N., M.S.N., AOCN®, exchange some thoughts at the Policy Institute.

Nurse Reinvestment Act of 2002. This legislation seeks to ensure that the current nursing shortage does not compromise quality cancer care.

Christine Polluck, legislative assistant for Rep. Shaw, urged the oncology nurses to encourage their representatives to join as co-sponsors to H.R. 1032, which to date includes as co-sponsors, Reps. Mark Foley (R-Fla.), Dave Camp (R-Mich.), and J.D. Hayworth (R-Ariz.). Rep. Shaw, a senior member of the Ways and Means Committee, will push to have H.R. 1032 included in a larger Medicare reform package, said Polluck.

Polluck advised the oncology nurses to use their congressional visits to “speak from the heart” and “give real life examples” of how Medicare payments “are affecting your ability to offer quality care to patients in your community.”

One attendee pointed out that the escalating cost of cancer drugs such as Gleevec, which can cost a patient \$2,400 per month, is becoming unaffordable for many Medicare patients who need other medications as well. Polluck replied that the Shaw bill proposes to set “parameters” to keep drug costs down.

She also mentioned that Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson and National Cancer Institute Director Andrew C. von Eschenbach, M.D., recently held a meeting to discuss cancer research and its funding, which Polluck described as a “good meeting.”

Saira Sultan, J.D., ACCC’s director of public policy, suggested that conference attendees follow-up their congressional visits with letters thanking their congressional representatives for listening and acting on these important issues. She encouraged oncology nurses “to invite their members of Congress or their staff to visit their cancer facility to

✓ ACCC’s People on the Move

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better understand how their cancer program works.”

Attendees at the policy institute also heard comprehensive and up-to-date presentations on the legislative and regulatory process from experts in the public policy arena. Oncology nurses learned how to impact legislative policy making by developing personal relations to build trust and reliability; telling real stories about real people; joining a political action group; and educating their congressional representatives on their issues.

“Your voices are heard,” assured presenter Bruce M. Fried, an attorney at Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal in Washington, D.C. “Nurses have a level of credibility among members of Congress and their staff which is better than anyone because you’re on the frontline.”

Reigniting the Spirit: A Program Just for Nurse Leaders

Twenty nurse leaders were selected to attend a new program, sponsored by ACCC, to provide oncology nurse leaders with strategies for creating a more

caring and appreciative work environment for their nursing staff and to improve nurse satisfaction in their daily work.

The two-day program, entitled “Reigniting the Spirit: Creating the Conditions for Caring,” was held June 19-20, 2003, in Charlotte, N.C. Applications were accepted from oncology nurse leaders at ACCC-member institutions and from ONS.

ACCC Partners with NCI to Promote Patient Education

ACCC’s Committee for Patient Advocacy and NCI’s Office of Education are partnering on a project to identify and reach out to patient health care educators at community cancer centers.

NCI is seeking to broaden its patient education efforts and open a dialogue with patient educators to find out their needs at these community cancer programs.

As part of this multifaceted project, the NCI Office of Education plans to publish an article on its patient education activities and its outreach efforts in an upcoming *Oncology Issues*. ☐