

Cary A. Present, M.D., F.A.C.P.



Cary A. Present, M.D., F.A.C.P., a hematologist and oncologist in Los Angeles, Calif., has been elected president of the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC). He assumed leadership on March 14, 2003, at the Association's 29th Annual National Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Present is currently president of California Cancer Medical Center, which has offices in Arcadia, West Covina, Glendora, and Los Angeles. He is also professor of clinical medicine at the University of Southern California School of Medicine. He was previously the director of medical oncology at the City of Hope National Medical Center in Los Angeles.

A nationally renowned scientist, Dr. Present is the author of more than 350 scientific articles, book chapters, and communications. He is a recognized expert in cancer treatment, detection, chemotherapy, experimental tumor biology and pharmacology, the use of liposomes in cancer therapy, magnetic resonance spectroscopy, and the measurement of quality of life in cancer patients.

His current research is focused on liposomal chemotherapy, using magnetic resonance spectroscopy and new drug combinations to improve chemotherapy, and bringing antiangiogenesis treatments to the bedside.

Dr. Present has been elected one of the "Best Doctors in America." He is currently the president of the Medical Oncology Association of Southern California and has served as president of the American Cancer Society in California.

Dr. Present completed postdoctoral training at Columbia University, the National Cancer Institute, and Washington University School of Medicine. He received his medical degree in 1966 from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Q *What do you hope to accomplish during your term?*

A First, I will be promoting access to the newest treatment programs to increase cure rates of patients with cancer. Thanks to new, effective, and exciting treatments, today is truly the best of times for our patients. Still, we must make sure that *all* patients with cancer can access these breakthrough therapies if we are to truly increase cure rates, improve quality of life, and assure the happiness and satisfaction of patients.

Through its meetings, educational programs, and publications, ACCC will continue to help hospitals and oncology practices implement programs to improve cancer care.

ACCC will also continue to promote access to state-of-the-art care for patients with cancer through its public policy initiatives, which is an equally important endeavor in this challenging time of Medicare cuts.

Q *What challenges face oncology in 2003?*

A This country is facing dramatic changes in how we value our care. In the past, while many of our hospital outpatient programs and most community oncology practices provided a broad range of services, they have been reimbursed based on the use of drugs.

The conundrum is that most members of the health care team entered the field of medicine not to serve as vendors of products, but to use our knowledge and services to increase cures and to help our patients enjoy a better quality of life. Indeed, we have been a profession dedicated to serving our patients, not to the marketing of drugs.

As we are forced to accept the changes in how society values our care and the problems arising from a switch from a drug-based reimbursement system to a services-based reimbursement system, we must learn how to incorporate these changes gracefully and effectively so that our patients can continue to receive the quality cancer care they expect and deserve.

Q *One of the issues you have talked about is increasing ACCC's recognition, both within the medical community and the population at large. How do you plan on achieving this goal during your term?*

A Unfortunately, it has been my experience that the good things ACCC does, such as activities that prevent cancer, increase cure rates, improve survival, and enhance quality of life, are not well appreciated by the public. Indeed, even within our member institutions, very often staff and administration are either unaware of ACCC or underutilize its resources.

This year ACCC's Membership Committee and Editorial Committee will examine how the Association can increase its value to member institutions, the oncology provider community, patients with cancer, and our communities at large. We will start with a special membership initiative so that our ranks can grow within the communities in which we practice.

Q *What is the future of oncology?*

A While I do not have a crystal ball to tell me what the future holds, we have the opportunity to use the changes occurring almost daily in the medical profession to transform the challenges of today into the hope for tomorrow. Each of us has a responsibility to recognize how the world is changing and to enable our patients to benefit from the new world that evolves. ☐