

ACCC's 31st National Annual Meeting

Nearly 500 oncology and related healthcare professionals attended the Association of Community Cancer Center's 31st National Annual Meeting held Mar. 9-12, 2005, in Alexandria, Va. The four-day conference offered up-to-the-minute information on legislative and regulatory rules affecting healthcare and innovative strategies for retaining and strengthening quality cancer care in community settings across the country.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Mark McClellan, MD, PhD, delivered a keynote address that focused on CMS's "new approach" to helping support high-quality, innovative,

efficient healthcare (see page 10). His speech was followed by an afternoon panel of experts from CMS and Capitol Hill that examined policy issues affecting hospital cancer programs and oncology practices. The session was moderated by Thomas Ault, of Health Policy Alternatives, Inc. Panelists agreed that Congress is taking a wait-and-see approach as MMA implementation unfolds and that any legislative change to MMA is unlikely in 2005.

Later in the conference, attendees heard from John McCoy of CMS's Office of Legislation who provided an overview of the new Medicare Part D Drug Benefit, which goes into effect Jan. 1, 2006.

Ernie Bodai, MD, inspired

attendees with an account of his successful fight to create the breast cancer research stamp and his ongoing efforts to bring breast cancer research stamps to countries around the world. His presentation received a standing ovation.

At Friday's award luncheon, Lee E. Mortenson, DPA, received ACCC's Progress Award in recognition of his more than 30 years of service to ACCC. Through Dr. Mortenson's efforts over the past three decades, the Association has succeeded in helping community cancer providers achieve equal partnership with university-based cancer centers in the fight against cancer and the delivery of quality cancer

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It was standing room only for the nearly 500 conference attendees who listened to CMS Administrator Mark McClellan, MD, PhD, (left) speak on key policy issues, including payments to physicians, drug coverage, and delivery of cancer care to Medicare patients.



Outgoing ACCC President Patti Jamieson-Baker, MSSW, MBA, and Ernie Bodai, MD, founder of the breast cancer research stamp discuss the complexities of "oncopolitics" and advocacy.



From left to right: Carol Bazell, MD, MPH, and Stephen Phillips from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; Deborah Williams, staffer for the House Ways and Means Committee; Joelle Oishi, staffer for the Senate Finance Committee (Majority); and Pat Bousliman, staffer for the Senate Finance Committee (Minority) provided a regulatory and legislative update on the implementation of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003.



After their presentation, the legislative panel took questions from audience members, including Past ACCC President Cary Present, MD.

care. Mortenson was the driving force behind several other important "wins" for the oncology community, including:

- Securing Medicare funding for hospice programs
- Creating standards and guidelines for community cancer centers
- Bringing clinical trials into the community setting.

As MMA implementation unfolds, cancer programs need to take advantage of every opportunity to stay informed and involved. Program sessions at ACCC's 22nd Fall Oncology Economic Conference, Sept. 13-16, 2005, are already being planned to update the multidisciplinary oncology team.

Christian G. Downs Takes Helm at ACCC



The Association of Community Cancer Centers has named Christian G. Downs, JD, MHA, as the Association's new Executive Director. Mr. Downs succeeds Lee E. Mortenson, DPA, who retired from ACCC's leadership position after more than 30 years of service.

In assuming the leadership role at ACCC, Mr. Downs will serve the Association's Board of Trustees and membership in its work on national policy and provider education. He will also be responsible for expanding relations with other oncology organizations and provider groups and developing new corporate partnerships.

"The Board is pleased and enthusiastic about Christian and the future of ACCC. We think Chris-


Staying Alive in 2005

ACCC's free course, *Staying Alive in 2005: Hands-on Strategies for Office-Based Oncology Practices*, wrapped up on April 7, 2005. More than 700 physicians, nurses, practice manager, and coders/billers benefited from the three-hour seminar, which was offered in 30 locations around the country. The course provided up-to-the minute, practical information on how to cope with ASP, work with the new G codes, and how to improve practice efficiencies, as well as an overview of the reimbursement outlook for 2006, and more.

Program attendees gave the course high marks. Here is what

some participants had to say:

- "Excellent program."
- "...Excellent presentation, very well done."
- "The info that you provided on [the] acquisition program is a great benefit."

Plans are underway to schedule a second round of "Staying Alive in 2005," which will be an updated program including the latest information on ASP, Medicare's Competitive Acquisition Program (CAP), and the new Medicare Part D benefit, which will go into effect Jan. 1, 2006. To learn more or to register, go to ACCC's Center for Provider Education at www.accc-cancer.org/education. 

tian has the energy, ideas, temperament, and experience to lead the Association in its mission," said ACCC President E. Strode Weaver, FACHE, MBA, MHSA. "I look forward to working with him."

Mr. Downs has more than 15 years of healthcare experience. He joined ACCC in 1998 and was instrumental in working with providers, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and Congress on hospital outpatient prospective payment system (HOPPS) issues. Working with state legislatures across the country, he helped promote off-label and clinical trials legislation. At the same time, he worked with individual insurers and carriers to help ensure patient access to new oncology therapies. Mr. Downs led Association efforts on such critical issues as easing implementation of HOPPS, ensuring patient access to new cancer therapies, and refining physician office payments for delivery of services.

Along with his advocacy work, Mr. Downs developed three new "centers" at ACCC:

- The Center for Provider Education, which develops educational programming for members on issues related to the financial and managerial aspects of running a cancer program.
- The Center for Patient and Provider Access, which focuses on

advocacy issues such as expanded drug indications and patient access to new therapies.

- The Center for the Oncology Workforce, which works to ensure a strong oncology workforce in the future.

Before joining ACCC in 1998, Mr. Downs worked in the public policy department of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) on physician office and billing and coding issues. Previously he administered a large tertiary care hospital, managed a physician multispecialty practice, and worked for the education and health committee of the Virginia State Senate.

"I have known Christian for years, and he will be an asset for ACCC," said Pearl Moore, CEO of the Oncology Nursing Society.

"ACCC made a good choice. I look forward to continuing to work with him in the future," added Joseph S. Bailes, MD, co-chair of ASCO's Government Relations Council.

Mr. Downs received his master's degree in health administration from the Medical College of Virginia and his law degree from George Mason University with a special focus on regulatory and administrative law. He is a board member of the Patient Advocate Foundation and C-Change, a large coordinating organization for cancer groups. 