



Reflections from an Award-winning CTR

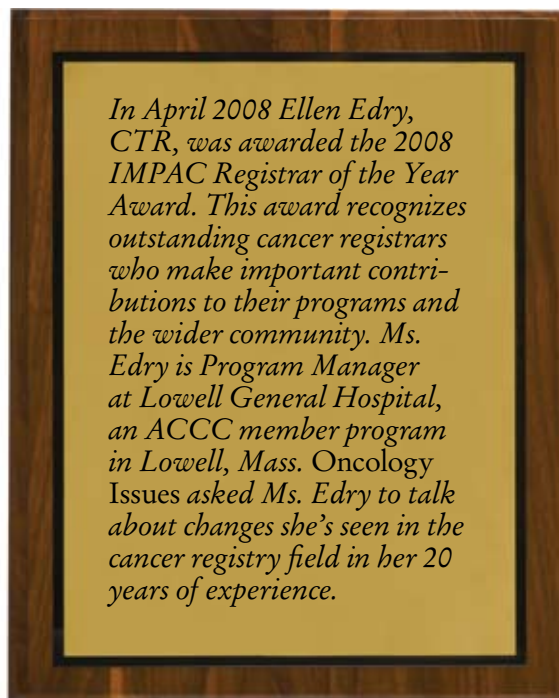
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I came to Lowell General Hospital (LGH), a community-based facility, in Lowell, Massachusetts, eight years ago as senior cancer registrar. I had spent the previous nine years working for a community hospital in New Hampshire. When I accepted my new position at LGH, I was anxious to relocate to a larger facility which was closer to Boston. In my role as senior registrar, I began moving the cancer program forward by developing performance improvement initiatives, and preparing us for an American College of Surgeons survey that was scheduled to take place within weeks of my start date.

The oncology program at LGH had just moved into a new state-of-the-art cancer center. This move opened new opportunities for program growth. Performance Improvement (PI) reporting and other patient-related data reporting services were just waiting to be introduced.

Over the course of a few years, my position evolved into program coordinator. In this new role, I began to work collaboratively with my team of registrars and cancer center operations team as well as hospital administration to enhance the cancer program. Together with my colleagues from different departments and disciplines, I was part of a progressive, forward-thinking team. We all caught "the bug" to move our program forward and look beyond our [professional] boundaries. I began to work with physician members of our medical staff to streamline difficult processes such as CAP [College of American Pathologists] compliance and AJCC [American Joint Committee on Cancer] staging form compliance.

Last year I was promoted to my



current position as program manager for cancer services to further enable me to assist in the development of our program's new multidisciplinary cancer clinics. To date, these include specialized clinics for newly diagnosed lung, breast, and head and neck cancers, and complex urology cases. Six months ago, our program also initiated a genetic screening program in collaboration with our Boston-based partners. Keeping everything on track to become the best cancer program in the community became easier as our team became more focused and organized.

And our hard work has paid off. In December 2007 the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer awarded our cancer program another full three-year accreditation with eight out of nine commendations, and we also re-established ourselves as a Comprehensive Community Cancer Program.

Putting our cancer registry data

to good use is high on my priority list. We have developed and implemented quality dashboards for breast, colon, and lung cancer to assist LGH in the preparation of quality standards and benchmarks for care.

I also focus on maintaining a close working relationship with our oncology social work department to assure that community prevention and screening efforts are in line with the data and trends that are tracked by the cancer registry. At our program, hospital administrators, as well as our cancer center operations team, depend on the data that are collected by the cancer registry to create, develop, and enhance the services we provide in the Merrimack Valley.

As my cancer registry role has grown, I think back some 20 years ago to my first job in the field, when someone in a community hospital medical records department decided to take a chance on me and hire me for the cancer registrar's position. With no experience but a strong will to learn, I have had the opportunity to assume a leadership role and become a mover and shaker. As a seasoned registry professional, I am always willing to share my knowledge with students and others who may be interested in a career move. Over the years I have mentored and taught more than 12 new students, two of whom are now employed in my department. I feel fortunate to work as part of a dynamic, forward-thinking team. I am also privileged to work with a director and friend who has never stifled my enthusiasm about a program or an idea. Together, all of this support has helped me achieve the honor of IMPAC Cancer Registrar of the Year. Thank you CR and EL. I am forever in your debt. 🙏