

Successful 16th Annual Oncology Presidents' Retreat

ACCC along with the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) hosted the 16th Annual Oncology President's Retreat, January 18-19, 2008, in Washington, D.C. Presidents and representatives from state oncology societies gathered to listen to speakers address key issues in cancer care. On Friday, Fred Barnes, executive editor of *The Weekly Standard*, and Bill Press, host of the nationally-syndicated talk radio program, "The Bill Press Show," spoke candidly about healthcare and election year politics.

Attendees then heard from Louis B. Jacques, MD, CMS director,



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Division of Items and Devices, on the future of the drug compendia.

"There is a light at the end of the tunnel," Jacques told attendees. "CMS used the [2008] physician fee schedule to put in place a process to make changes to the drug compendia."

In addition to the question of whether or not CMS is going to recognize Thomson Micromedex's *DrugPoints*® as a successor compendium to the *USP DI*, Jacques said that most other questions revolved around *DrugPoints* new tiered-system. "Most of what I have heard from the oncology community is anxiety about that publication [*DrugPoints*]. We are leaving the door open to you instead of CMS making that decision." Dr. Jacques said that anyone who wanted to submit an application for *DrugPoints* to be considered as a Medicare recognized compendium was invited to do so.

Jacques was followed by Kenneth Clarke, FHIMSS, a senior consultant at IBM Healthlink Solutions, who spoke about the art of contract negotiations. "The simple contracting goals to have your expectations met in a reasonable time and at a reasonable expense—plus ways to resolve problems—are surprisingly hard to meet," Clarke admitted before offering an explanation. "Provider goals and vendor

goals are often out of alignment."

"Getting everything you want in an IT contract is a challenge," Clarke told attendees. "Just remember that *everything* in that contract is negotiable." According to Clarke, the key is for providers to clearly define:

- Scope of service
- Product requirements
- An acceptable timeline
- Price and a payment methodology
- Acceptance guidelines
- Dispute mechanisms
- Liabilities for both parties.

The Friday afternoon session ended with a presentation on patient assistance programs. "The underinsured [patient population] is a bigger and more long-term issue than the uninsured," said Tracy Foster, president of the Lash Group. "Patient obligations continue to grow. Compared to 2006, patient cost-sharing has increased by about 30 percent."

Lash told attendees that today "patients need their providers to help manage their drug costs." To assist in these efforts, she outlined six good business practices:

1. Solicit updated insurance information
2. Prospectively verify insurance benefits
3. Re-assess coverage and patient out-of-pocket obligations based on current prescription needs
4. Assess eligibility for "extra help" through Medicare
5. Refer patients to other assistance programs as required
6. Leverage manufacturer patient support programs.

Lash was followed by Margaret Harville, CPhT, a patient assistance coordinator at Oncology Pharmaceutical Services, a division of US Oncology. Harville provided

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From left to right: ACCC Executive Director Christian Downs, JD, MHA; Fred Barnes; Bill Press; and ACCC President Richard B. Reiling, MD, FACS.



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Saturday morning, attendees heard from Joseph S. Bailes, MD, chair of ASCO's Government Relations Council, with an overview of CMS's National Coverage Decision (NCD) process and an update on the agency's NCD on erythropoiesis stimulating agents (ESAs). Bailes indicated that the agency's NCD on ESAs sets new precedent in that it significantly restricts coverage for previously covered uses of an existing drug (as opposed to a new drug). Looking to the future, Dr. Bailes anticipates an increase in NCDs from the agency.

John E. Feldmann, MD, FACP, medical director of the Moses Cone Regional Cancer Center, presented an update on issues relating to clinical trials. With medical oncology practices operating in "survival mode," Feldmann said, participating in clinical trials is increasing challenging. Practices "can't participate in clinical trials if they are going to go out of business," Feldmann said. Budgeting for all costs associated with participating in clinical trials is essential, he said.

ACCC Launches Online CE Resource

ACCC has launched the ACCC Continuing Education Blackboard. This online oncology education resource is available on ACCC's website at www.accc-cancer.org/education/education_blackboard.asp. ACCC's CE Blackboard includes content from educational companies covering a range of topics for nurses, pharmacists, and physicians. Content formats vary from slideshows to virtual lectures to newsletters.

Current topics include:

- Special Report: Supportive Care Issues in Cancer
- Highlights on Anemia, Neutropenia, and Mucositis
- Hot Topics in Colorectal Cancer for the Oncology APN

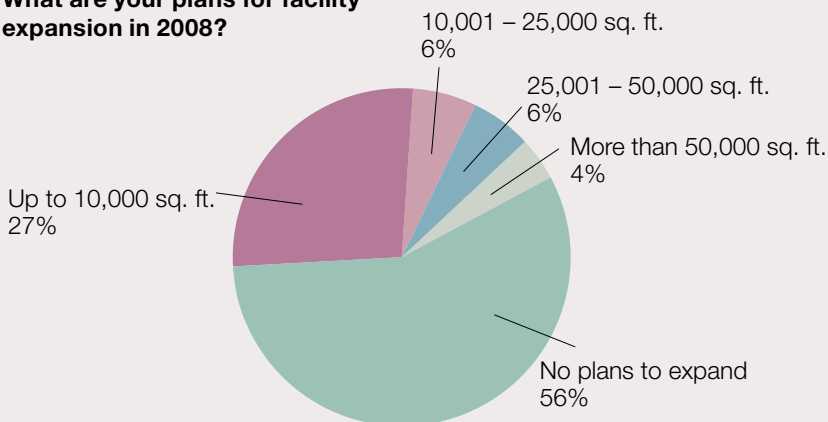
■ Recurrent Indolent NHL: New Strategies for Treatment

Meniscus Educational Institute (MEI) will be the first medical education company to provide ACCC members with oncology education programs on the ACCC CE Blackboard. The CE Blackboard is available to ACCC's members free of charge.



ACCC's Online Poll

What are your plans for facility expansion in 2008?



Save the Dates

2008

ACCC's 25th National Oncology Economics Conference
September 17-20, 2008
Hyatt Regency
San Francisco
5 Embarcadero Center
San Francisco, Calif.

2009

ACCC's 35th Annual National Meeting
March 18-21, 2009
Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center on the Potomac
National Harbor, Md.

2009

ACCC's 26th National Oncology Economics Conference
September 22-25, 2009
Hyatt Regency
Minneapolis on Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, Minn.