

Feeling Better

by Richard B. Reiling, MD, FACS

My year as ACCC President has flown by. On January 1, the New Year stretches before us full of promise and time feels expansive. But only a few days earlier, in late December, time seemed to compress as we wrapped up year-end business and, perhaps, reflected on unrealized aspirations and less than desired outcomes.

When I first entered medicine and cancer care in the 1960s, I envisioned a future that would hold much greater progress in eradicating the devastating effects of cancer, if not cancer itself. Today, as I am approaching the end of my career, I am frustrated by where we are—and where we could be—in our fight against this disease. And yet, in truth, we have made remarkable progress. Modern medicine is a miracle in itself, and the last quarter of the 20th century unveiled wonderful new tools to add to our armamentarium against cancer.

In January, one of my most memorable teachers, who I also counted as a friend, Dr. Judah Folkman, passed away. This remarkable man was almost a prophet and surely should have been a Nobel Laureate. Dr. Folkman's work related to angiogenesis—the concept of stopping cancers by molecularly stopping the source of blood supply to tumors—was the basis of his extensive, innovative contributions to cancer care. And yet, a tiny clot in a very small vessel stopped his own progress. I find comfort in the fact that Dr. Folkman's work and legacy will continue to inform our understanding of this disease going forward.

As we look to the future of cancer care in this country, we recognize the vital role community cancer centers play in delivering care in the



community setting. ACCC—like all associations and organizations—faces expanding horizons in fulfilling its mission in an increasingly complex healthcare environment.

ACCC is recognized for its support of community cancer centers as well as community cancer physicians—and the Association's task of providing fairly for both constituencies is not a simple one. As ACCC moves forward, the Association will continue its mission as the leading organization that supports comprehensive cancer care in the community—*your* community.

The theme of my presidency has been “survivorship.” However, it is important to recognize that cancer survivorship really encompasses the concept of care that is truly comprehensive. Survivorship includes not only screening, prevention, and scientifically valid care, but also care for *all* the psychosocial issues that are a very real part of every cancer patient's journey.

It has been a very distinct honor and pleasure to serve as your President. (My wife, Liz, joins me in thanking you all for this honor.) I have had the opportunity to meet many of you and share in your joys and frustrations in caring for our neighbors, friends, and loved ones with cancer. ACCC has a wonderful staff in Rockville, and the energy for the future is very bright—even with the challenges facing us.

My former partner, David Small, MD, used to greet his patients with this simple, yet uplifting, statement: *How can I make you feel better today?* It is my sincere hope that you, I, and the entire cancer care community will continue our best to make our friends and neighbors “feel better today!” 🐾

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St. Joseph's/Candler Hospital in Savannah, Ga., a participant in NCI's National Community Cancer Centers Program (NCCCP)