

ACCC Member's Perspective

Two radiation oncologists reflect on staying active in ACCC

By way of introduction, *Oncology Issues* asked radiation oncologists, Dale E. Fuller, MD, FACR, FASTRO, and John R. Russell, MD, MS, FACRO, FACR, about how they decided on careers in radiation oncology. As Dr. Fuller tells the story, "I arrived in the discipline of radiation oncology because I never took typing in school." In 1961, he started a residency in urology that required residents to type all their own paperwork. "I was busy and typing consumed *many* evenings," Fuller said. When his one-year draft deferment ended, he took a leave from his residency to enter the U.S. Air Force. "I decided to opt out of urology and into radiology, where I could dictate my reports. I found I missed the patient contact when reading x-rays, and when I got to radiation oncology, I felt I was home again and never left."

The military played a role in Dr. Russell's career path as well. He started his career in medical physics, and then attended medical school in his home town of San Antonio, Texas. While serving in the Army, Dr. Russell completed an internship in internal medicine. "The Pentagon 'assisted in my selection' of radiation oncology as my specialty when I was assigned to the University of Florida in Gainesville," said Dr. Russell. Three years later, he became radiation oncologist for Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Denver, Colorado. Private practice followed when he accepted a position in Mobile, Alabama, at the Mobile Infirmary Medical Center.

Both physicians also have in common long-time ACCC membership. Dr. Fuller has been an active participant in ACCC for more than 20 years. He's a frequent contributor to ACCCExchange, the Association's listserve; currently serves on the Editorial Committee; and usually each year attends at least one national meeting. Over the years,

he has served on the Board, been on numerous committees, and participated in the sessions during which the ACCC Cancer Program Guidelines were initially developed. What accounts for his long-standing commitment to ACCC?

"Over the years, I have been continually impressed at the growth of ACCC, the quality of the membership, and the quality of the meetings. ACCC is truly the only forum where all the parties interested in oncology come together as a community of peers with the goal of making things better for patients," he said.

"ACCC has been the place where I can learn what is on the mind of the other professionals who care for patients and who care for the environments where patients are served. It is also a credible voice communicating with the policy makers who so greatly influence, in a wide variety of ways, what we do for our patients. In terms of advocacy, ACCC does a better job, in many ways, for our cancer centers than the professional organizations who mainly lobby for the parochial interests of the individual profession," notes Dr. Fuller.

Radiation oncologist John R. Russell, MD, MS, FACRO, FACR, has been an ACCC member since the 1990s when one of his radiation oncology partners introduced him to the Association. "State of the art data, best practice models, current reimbursement issues, campaigning on 'the Hill' for cancer patients, coordinating efforts throughout the country to improve care and access to care were all part of ACCC. I have been active in ACCC since the early



John R. Russell, MD,
MS, FACRO, FACR



Dale Fuller, MD,
FACR, FASTRO

1990s for all of these reasons," said Dr. Russell.

Dr. Russell's many contributions to ACCC include serving on the Board of Trustees and on numerous ACCC committees. He has presented at meetings on new procedures in treatment, authored articles for *Oncology Issues*, and served as ACCC liaison to ASRO (formerly ASTRO).

"ACCC brings together, in a unique way, that diverse group of professionals who care for cancer patients in the United States. From my perspective the Association provides knowledge and balance to a radiation oncologist in a community setting that is difficult to acquire in other settings," said Dr. Russell. "I urge each of our ACCC members to approach your radiation oncologists and tell them your story as to the value of ACCC participation. As I reflect on 25 years of practice as a radiation oncologist, I consider ACCC as definitely contributing to my success. One never stops learning when immersed in such a talented and dedicated organization. The stimulus is to reach a little higher and a little farther." ■