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Association of Community Cancer Centers



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www.accc-cancer.org



Answering the Call

by Christian Downs, JD, MHA

As I have said in these pages before, the greatest threat to the delivery of quality cancer care in the next 25 years will not be cost, or reimbursement, or even innovation. The greatest threat? The fact that this country may not have enough providers to deliver the care.

In your hands, you are holding a special edition of *Oncology Issues*, focused solely on the oncology workforce shortage. This edition, conceived by ACCC's Immediate Past President, Luana Lamkin, RN, MPH, is important for several reasons. First, as always, ACCC's journal takes a multidisciplinary approach. Yes, we will likely see a shortage of physicians over the next decade, but we are also likely to see a shortage of nurses, social workers, registrars, medical physicists, and others. So our first goal when developing this special issue was to ensure that the discussion encompassed interdisciplinary members of the cancer care delivery team.

Second, we wanted to provide practical information and strategies that your program or practice can use today. We are all aware of the many important "academic" articles and studies about the oncology workforce shortage. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we wanted to make the information in our journal actionable in your cancer programs.

Here are some highlights of what you will find in this issue.

To start, representatives from ASCO and ONS provide updates on what these organizations are doing to address shortages in their respective fields.

Next, Carol Eck, RN, BSN, MBA, shares an easily replicable *pro forma* developed by Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center. Eck's team used this tool to justify adding



advanced nurse practitioners to their cancer program staff.

In "Reaching Out to Nursing Students," Mugal and Williamson talk about an innovative program that allows nursing students to rotate through Bon Secours St. Mary's comprehensive cancer program. By exploring different aspects of oncol-

ogy nursing, it is hoped that some of these students will choose to enter the field of oncology nursing.

Margaret Rosenzweig, PhD, FNP-BC, AOCNP, and Ellen Roth, RN, MSN, share the curriculum developed at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, which provides standardized basic cancer care education to oncology nurse practitioners new to cancer care.

Finally, while this issue offers many practical strategies that can be put into use immediately, we also look to the future. In "Patient Portals—the Way of the Future?" Anna McDaniel, PhD, RN, FAAN, talks about the patient portal research effort underway at the Indiana University Melvin and Bren Simon Cancer Center and the promise this technology holds.

Our hope is that this special issue spurs your cancer program to be proactive about workforce issues. And maybe a few of you can go a step further. If your community cancer center has developed a program to help safeguard against a workforce shortage, share it with us. Write an article for *Oncology Issues*, give a presentation at an ACCC meeting, or participate in one of ACCC's many educational programs.

As we all know, providing cancer care is unique in the healthcare field. It's not a job; it's a calling. And together we can lay the groundwork for others to answer this call in the future. ☞

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