

Ready for the Data Deluge?

by Al B. Benson III, MD, FACP

We are living in a time of astonishing promise and staggering challenges. We have harnessed the power of computers to sequence the human genome; moved forward in genomics and proteomics; advanced radiation therapy imaging and treatment technology; and drawn closer to the goal of delivering personalized cancer care.

Today, we have unprecedented potential to amass and analyze data in the service of improved patient care and evidence-based medicine. And yet, the demand for more and more data is something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, more and better data hold the promise of more efficient, evidence-based patient care. On the other hand, the twin pressures of increasing demands for data acquisition and increasing regulatory requirements are creating significant challenges for community cancer centers. In short, there's a sense that these mounting pressures may have some deleterious consequences.

Each ACCC President selects a theme issue. In the context of the current healthcare environment, I believe a critical issue is how our community cancer centers will be affected by the spiraling demands for data acquisition, and, in particular, the potential impact of these demands on clinical research in the community setting.

If the trend toward shifts in site of service continues, i.e., oncology practices moving toward integration with hospital systems—how is this consolidation likely to affect clinical research? Will hospitals support the data acquisition requirements mandated for clinical trial participation? Will hospitals provide the staff needed for these efforts? These changes are occurring during an economic crisis when many question

whether we can sustain the growth of comprehensive, multidisciplinary cancer resources that we strive to offer our patients, when demands for such services will surely increase, and

with workforce shortages looming on the horizon.

And, whether we are in the community or academic setting, comparative effectiveness research will undoubtedly require greater emphasis on data collection. Currently we do not have the infrastructure to link various databases that


would maximize accurate effectiveness comparisons in most oncologic populations.

As these pressures converge, it is critical that community-based oncology programs have a voice. We need to assess how ACCC member programs will be affected and understand whether these patterns are likely to have a deleterious effect on community cancer centers' ability to participate in clinical research.

Listening to many ACCC member programs from around the country, we hear some common themes emerging: *How are we going to handle this constant level of submission and regulation? How are we going to support the personnel to meet the data acquisition demands?*

For my ACCC President's theme, the Association will be developing a questionnaire and subsequent white paper discussing the challenges of data collection. The purpose is two-fold:

- To educate our membership about the problem and challenges and develop educational resources to assist with data collection
- To inform ACCC's advocacy efforts on these issues.

With your participation, ACCC can help us all be prepared. Community-based oncology must have a voice on these issues. 



Coming in Your 2011 Oncology Issues

- ◆ Building a Comprehensive Integrative Therapy Program in a Community Cancer Center
- ◆ Using Your Cancer Registry to Aid in ACoS and NAPBC Accreditation
- ◆ Mentoring a New Cancer Program Administrator
- ◆ Ensuring Long-term Sustainability of Patient Navigation Services
- ◆ HITECT and HIPAA: Is Your Cancer Center Still HIPAA Compliant?
- ◆ The 340B Drug Pricing Program—Everything Community Cancer Centers Want to Know but are Afraid to Ask
- ◆ Developing a Stellar Oncology Homecare Program
- ◆ RAC Readiness
- ◆ Providing Spiritually Sensitive Care in the Acute Palliative Care Unit
- ◆ Clinical Trials and Research in a Community Setting
- ◆ A Day in the Life of a Patient Navigator

Don't Miss Out!

Interested in advertising and other marketing opportunities? Contact Mal Milburn at 301.984.9496, ext. 252 or mmilburn@accc-cancer.org.