

Fast Forward

by Thomas Whittaker, MD, FACP

Do you remember what oncology care and healthcare were like 20 years ago? Ten years ago? Five years ago? How about in the past 24 months? Change in the healthcare environment seems to occur more quickly than ever, mirroring change in technology but also change in our ability to finance and support the quality healthcare we have today.

What will the healthcare landscape look like three or five or 10 years from now and under what financial constraints will we have to operate? The recent failure of our congressional "Super Committee" to help guide difficult budget cuts and perform financial planning for our country is sobering. The amount of debt, the amount of needed cuts, and the amount of political pressure were all too great to reach any consensus or compromise.

All of these conflicting factors make it hard to predict what the future will hold, but it is painfully clear that we will be asked to do our work and carry out our mission in the future with scarcer resources. As we face inevitable change, I am convinced we need the resources and support of the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) more than ever.

ACCC has a broad palette focused on advocacy, education, and networking. Providers need advocacy to help us prepare for the future and to defend our position of providing the highest quality cancer care for all. Recent examples of ACCC advocacy efforts include:

- ACCC members lobbying on Capitol Hill
- ACCC comment letters to proposed rule making and regulation changes
- Conference calls and analysis for



membership of new regulations including the final ACO rule, and the 2012 OPPI and Physician Fee Schedule rules

- ACCC-hosted educational sessions for Capitol Hill staff on issues in cancer care, such as the critical issue of drug shortages.

ACCC's educational offerings are just as strong. The Association provides educational programs that target the design of cancer programs, as well as the care of the patient in every step of the cancer care continuum. ACCC has

developed resources on patient navigation, survivorship, patient assistance programs, transitions between care settings, cancer care trends in the community setting, and much more. New educational projects underway include "Establishing and Improving Cancer Nutrition Programs in the Community Cancer Setting" and the "Financial Information and Learning Network for Community-Based Cancer Programs."

In addition to our advocacy and education, our greatest asset is the ACCC membership network. A vocal and involved membership creates a unique network of "how to" opportunities. The ACCCExchange discussion group on ACCC's online MyNetwork community is a ready reference and resource for all of our member practices and programs. We learn and evolve as individuals and programs by hearing from the ACCC network and its "best practices."

Change in cancer care will continue in the future—and likely more rapidly and dramatically than in the past. One thing will not change. As a part of ACCC, we will continue to work to preserve the quality of care no matter what the future brings. 📞

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