

## ONCOLOGY ISSUES

The Journal of the  
Association of Community Cancer Centers

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## FROM THE EDITOR

# Walking a Mile in Their Shoes

BY CHRISTIAN DOWNS, JD, MHA



I want to bring your attention to an article that I read in a recent issue of *Health Affairs*. Now it might seem a bit odd that the editor of one publication would refer readers to an article in another publication—but that's how we bounce at ACCC. We have a vested interest in ensuring that our members receive useful, credible information. We care a little less about where you get it from.

The article is by Amy Berman, and it's titled "Living Life in My Own Way—And Dying That Way as Well." It is a moving piece about Ms. Berman's terminal cancer, her personal interactions with our healthcare delivery system, and the power of taking control and direction of your own care.

After reading the article, I started thinking about how we look at the "whole patient." Are we doing everything to treat the *patient* with the disease, rather than just the disease? How are *you* helping your patients live while they are being treated?

This edition of ACCC's journal addresses several of these "whole patient" issues head on.

First, newly elected ACCC Board Member, Faye Flemming, shares how she developed an innovative oncofertility program after seeing firsthand what happened to her young niece when she was diagnosed with cancer and her fertility needs went unmet by her clinicians. Flemming writes about the importance of timely assessment of fertility needs, education about fertility risks and options, counseling, quick referrals, and ongoing follow-up. And, as

we always try to do in *Oncology Issues*, we include practical tools that you can adapt and use at *your* cancer program.

Next, ACCC's associate editor, Amanda Patton, interviews the co-chairs of the Alliance for Fertility Preservation: John Mulhall, MD, and Zev Rosenwaks, MD. In brief, the interview talks about what this fledgling organization hopes to do to help ensure that the fertility needs of cancer patients are met—after diagnosis, during treatment, and into survivorship.

Lastly, on the "whole patient" theme, check out the article on STAR Program Certification at Jupiter Medical Center in Florida. Implementing this cancer rehabilitation program required a three-phase process: training staff, developing and putting into place protocols, and tracking patient outcomes.

And we cannot talk about the "whole patient" without looking at how care is delivered. In this issue we highlight the importance of clinical pharmacists to patient care. Author Annie Lambert shows how clinical pharmacists are a crucial component of a system of double-checks that ensure safe care, optimal charge capture, and compliance with both external and internal guidelines.

Then, Matthew Sturm and Jessica Turgon write about bringing hospitals and physicians together in an integrated service line. The authors draw on years of experience working with hospitals and physicians to provide several critical strategies to ensure successful outcomes.

But let me close by going back to Amy Berman and her moving article in *Health Affairs*. Right now, this article is open access and available for all to read at: <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/31/4/871.full>. For me, sharing in this patient's experiences is a great reminder of why we all need to read *Oncology Issues*. 