

## ONCOLOGY ISSUES

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## FROM THE EDITOR

# Combining “Book” and “Street” Smarts

BY CHRISTIAN DOWNS, JD, MHA



We have all

run across a colleague, employee, or speaker whom we would call “book smart.”

And while this statement is a

compliment on one level, it can also imply that the person may not have what we would call “street smarts” or a practical understanding of the way the world works. Since at various times I have been accused of having neither, I feel completely comfortable commenting on both.

Clearly in cancer care delivery “book smarts” are important. Given the nature of healthcare, intelligent and learned people are attracted to the field.

I am amazed at the range of skills and knowledge our providers have—not only in clinical expertise, but also in marketing, communication, finance, accounting, management, and psychology. But I am also interested in seeking out those individuals and programs that demonstrate “street smarts.” They tackle the situation or the issue at hand, they get things done, and they meet real-world challenges.

In this edition of *Oncology Issues*, we highlight a few members who used their “book smarts” and “street smarts” to better serve their patients. For example, adolescents and young adults often have unmet survivorship needs. In our cover story, learn how the Seton Cancer Survivor Center bridges this gap through clinical care, navigation services, and provider and patient education.

Another prime example: the experience of UT Southwestern Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center. New American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer standards now *require* a process to integrate and monitor psychosocial distress screening of cancer patients.

This program is way ahead of the curve, developing and using its own screening instrument.

I find that the people and programs that successfully combine “book” and “street” smarts also display “out-of-the-box thinking.” And such was the case at Roper St. Francis Hospital. Faced with a shortage of registrars, the manager of the cancer registry department hired out-of-state employees. The solution worked well, and then came change. Legal issues required that these abstractors move from being employees to becoming contractors. Read the rest of the article to help identify the staffing model that may best fit your program.

Finally, Feist-Weiller Cancer Center’s Arts in Medicine (AIM) program combines “book” and “street” smarts with a generous dose of empathy. This low-cost, volunteer-driven program improves the patient experience through art. Read on to hear about the positive effects this innovative program has had on patients, staff, and volunteers.

ACCC is an organization that—through meetings, publications, education programs, *MyNetwork*, and other resources—helps you tap into the experiences of programs and providers who combine “book” and “street” smarts. If you attended the ACCC 29th National Oncology Conference in San Antonio in October, you heard from 11 programs that won 2012 ACCC Innovator Awards. (ACCC’s Annual Innovator Awards are sponsored by GE Healthcare—the company that created the healthy-magination challenge to identify and accelerate ideas to advance breast cancer early detection and diagnostics, and ultimately help save lives affected by breast cancer.) All of our 2012 Innovator Award Winners demonstrated this combination of “smarts.” If you didn’t make it to the conference, ACCC’s Virtual Conference lets you access all the “smarts” at your convenience. Visit [www.accc-cancer.org/oncologyconference](http://www.accc-cancer.org/oncologyconference). 