



Association of Community Cancer Centers

ONCOLOGY ISSUES

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FROM THE EDITOR

Born to Learn?

BY CHRISTIAN DOWNS, JD, MHA



A predominant trait among healthcare providers is a love of learning. A brief look at the formal educational requirements for physicians, nurses,

pharmacists, and licensed social workers attests to this fact. And even those of us in the healthcare field who do not have clinical backgrounds usually have an advanced degree or two.

Yes, the formal education process is a requirement to enter the healthcare field. But this alone does not explain the desire to continually learn. Surely this is something in the providers' DNA.

This trait is particularly true for providers of cancer care. In these pages, I have often written about how the unique demands of oncology make caring for patients with cancer more of a calling than a vocation. Many of my columns have touched on the compassion and exceptional level of commitment cancer care providers have for the patients and families they serve.

The field of oncology is also unique in that it requires constant and consistent learning by its providers. What are the latest clinical studies? How will these affect patients? What information is available on supportive and integrative care for patients? How can we improve the care delivery system?

Cancer care providers are involved in the learning process both as students and as teachers. Many providers teach on a daily basis, helping members of the cancer care team stay current on the latest advances in care.

Some highlights of this edition of *Oncology Issues* focus on learning from both the student and the teacher

perspectives. Sheila Stephens and Maria Tria Tirona write about an innovative collaboration to increase the number of medical oncology fellows. Their article describes how hospitals and their cancer programs can partner with schools of medicine to develop and fund oncology fellowship programs. Read how one community cancer center did just that. In its first year, this innovative program received 84 applications for its two fellowship positions.

Community outreach is another way that oncology providers often serve as teachers. Margaret Parniawski shares the story of Bridgeport Hospital's One-Day Cancer College. This free educational event helps to inform the community about cancer treatments, survivorship, and the services offered by the hospital's Norma F. Pfriem Cancer Institute and its five Centers of Excellence.

As the leading education and advocacy organization for the cancer team, ACCC's commitment to learning is evidenced by its national and regional meetings and the variety of programs offered through its Center for Provider Education. This March, ACCC invites you to participate in both learning and teaching. Join us for Capitol Hill Day on March 6. The program includes a morning orientation—learning how to advocate with your elected officials on Capitol Hill. In the afternoon, you will be “teaching” your legislative representatives about the critical issues affecting delivery of quality cancer care. Then, plan to stay for ACCC's 39th Annual National Meeting, March 6-8, with sessions on Medicaid expansion, payment reform, ACOs, regulatory changes under the ACA, and more. This year's new Leadership Track is designed to help foster new leaders within your program. Learn more and register at www.accc-cancer.org/annualmeeting.

How can you resist? It's in your DNA. ☐