

ISSUES

Why *Your* Voice Matters

BY MATTHEW FARBER, MA



ACCC President George Kovach, MD, has chosen “the right treatment at the right time” as the theme message of his term. Central to Dr. Kovach’s theme is the idea that ACCC members—community cancer care providers—are the best positioned to determine what that “right treatment” should be for each cancer patient. However, the concept is not that simple. A multitude of coverage and reimbursement factors come into play, and decisions that are made far from the exam room impact the decisions that can be made in it.

As community cancer care providers who experience first-hand the challenges of providing quality cancer care, ACCC members are in the best position to educate legislators and policy-makers at both the federal and local level. To help ensure community oncology providers’ ability to choose “the right treatment at the right time,” ACCC is launching a new Grassroots Advocacy Campaign.

There is a host of critical issues in oncology right now—from drug shortages, to adequate reimbursement, to access to clinical trials, to name just a few. ACCC’s interdisciplinary membership provides perspectives from across the oncology care spectrum on these issues—and is central to advocating for “the right treatment at the right time.” What matters to a physician in the office setting may not matter to the pharmacist in a small hospital or to the nurse in a large health system—so finding common ground is an important step in effectively advocating for our concerns. As part of its Grassroots

Advocacy Campaign, ACCC has identified and grouped the major concerns that could impact oncology care in 2013, into three main areas:

1. Preserving Patient Access to Care
2. Advancing Medicare
3. Creating Appropriate Reimbursement.


Under each of these categories, ACCC further details specific pressing concerns such as drug shortages, oral parity, sequestration, the need for chemotherapy teaching codes, and others, that may directly affect many different segments of ACCC membership. Visit www.accc-cancer.org/advocacy/QualityCare.asp to read more on these issues and find those of most concern to your cancer program.

Get Involved!

The goal of ACCC’s Grassroots Advocacy Campaign is to have ACCC members engage with their Congressional representatives, present the three core issues mentioned above, and then drill down to the specific concerns that matter most to them. We believe ACCC members can help Congress become better educated on how these issues affect cancer patients and their care providers on a day-to-day basis. Most legislators do not understand what the cuts from sequestration would mean for oncology physician practices. Likewise, they do not understand the benefit that having accurate chemotherapy teaching codes would bring to providers and patients. Even more important, they may not realize that these codes, in addition to codes for palliative

care, might actually decrease costs in the long term. And without your voice, your elected officials may never know these important facts.

Therefore, ACCC needs you. Getting involved in a grassroots initiative can take as little as five minutes—and to help you get started, we’ve created new resources at www.accc-cancer.org/advocacy. ACCC’s new Legislative Action Center features information on these issues and templates to help you discuss them. If you want to write a letter on any of the identified concerns, find the appropriate form letter and fill in your name, some basic information about your practice or hospital, and your ZIP Code. ACCC will send the letter for you. If you prefer to call to express your concerns, use our advocacy scripts to guide you during the call.

Of course, advocating in person may be the most powerful way to get involved, so join us for ACCC’s Capitol Hill Day on March 6. ACCC will schedule meetings with your elected officials in Washington, D.C. We will provide an introductory session on advocacy basics in the morning, and in the afternoon, we will visit Capitol Hill. For more information on Capitol Hill Day and ACCC’s Grassroots Advocacy Campaign, contact me at mfarber@acc-cancer.org or fill out the form on our website at www.accc-cancer.org/advocacy/Feedback.asp. 

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