

ONCOLOGY ISSUES

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FROM THE EDITOR

Embrace Your Uniqueness

BY CHRISTIAN DOWNS, JD, MHA



There is only one you for all time.

Fearlessly be yourself.—Anthony Rapp, actor

I have probably visited a few hundred cancer programs over my career. Much like people, each one was a little different and—in some cases—vastly different from the others.

In many conversations I have with providers, I often hear the words: “We are going to launch a program just like (fill in the blank) is doing.” Or “I see that there is a national trend to integrate physician practices, we should do that here.”

My response usually goes along the line of: “You are a unique provider, meeting the specific needs of *your* community and *your* patients.” Of course looking outward to what others are doing is important, even essential, in today’s healthcare environment. But for insight and perspective on next steps, looking inward can be equally important.

This edition of *Oncology Issues* is exciting because it highlights a few programs that focused inward, examined their strengths and weaknesses, and developed action plans uniquely-tailored to their specific needs.

For example, quality improvement coordinator Cynthia Jones offers step-by-step suggestions for launching a dedicated quality improvement program and describes the benefits it has brought to Rex Cancer Center in Raleigh, N.C. Her article argues for the importance of continual self-assessment

and using data to drive and document quality improvement.

Another great example is the work Ernie Elemento and Vasia Craddick have done at the Southwest Cancer Center in Lubbock, Tex. A 2012 ACCC Innovator Award Winner, Southwest used patient and staff feedback to improve its processes and satisfaction scores.

Now, using patient satisfaction as a tool for change is nothing new. But when was the last time you used that measure as effectively as Southwest Cancer Center? And do you survey the satisfaction of your staff? If so, do you seek to improve staff satisfaction? And when you survey your patients and staff, do you ask specific questions, unique to your cancer program, or do you use the same survey tools as every other cancer program? Asking for feedback from patients and staff is another way of looking inward. The information you gather can be an invaluable tool in assessing your unique community and programmatic needs.

ACCC has a wealth of resources for you at its meetings, on its website, www.accc-cancer.org, through its online community on *MyNetwork*, and in its publications and education programs on how other cancer programs are addressing challenges identical to those you are facing. Take advantage of their experiences to improve *your* program. But don’t forget: your program is unique—so embrace your uniqueness. 