

40 Years of Teamwork

BY VIRGINIA T. VAITONES, MSW, OSW-C



As I write my last column as ACCC

President, I am reminded of all the great opportunities that have come my way this year and all the wonderful colleagues that I

have interacted with at various conferences and meetings. It has been an amazing year, thank you!


My presidential theme has focused on the multidisciplinary cancer care team, and teamwork comes in many different forms. A team that is special to me is my “ACCC Team,” which is celebrating its 40th birthday in 2014. The ACCC team is made up of two groups. The first is the ACCC staff who work diligently to ensure that we—the members—have the educational tools and resources to keep our programs up to date with the fast changing world of cancer care, as well as a strong and united voice on Capitol Hill and during communications with regulatory agencies, such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

The other team is the ACCC membership, which totals nearly 20,000 individuals from hospital-based programs, physician-owned practices, oncology state societies, and individual members. The networking of the ACCC membership is like no other organization I have ever been associated with during my long career. ACCC members are active and invested in the Association. For example, ACCCExchange (the Association’s listserv) had more than 600 posts in the last quarter of 2013. In January 2014, the digital edition of ACCC’s 2014 *Patient Assistance and Reimbursement Guide* received more than 18,500 hits.

As we get ready to celebrate ACCC’s 40th anniversary, I spent some time looking back at past editions of *Oncology Issues* from 2002—the year I first became involved with the Association. One of the articles that sparked my interest was “Oral Oncology Products: Barriers to Successful Adoption” by Mary Lou Bowers, George Silberman, and Lee E. Mortenson. Among the issues identified by

the authors were concerns about patient compliance with oral agents and concerns about reimbursement of oral agents so that programs could afford to prescribe them and patients could afford to take them. Talk about an organization with an eye to the future!

Today ACCC members continue to struggle with these issues, but we have made great progress. As part of its 40th Annual National Meeting, April 1–2, 2014, Arlington, Va., ACCC members will visit their legislators during Capitol Hill Day on March 31. This year, I plan on educating my legislators about S. 1879 and H.R. 1801. These bills have been written to ensure oral parity so that our patients will be able to afford their oral chemotherapy medications, which, in turn, will help with compliance. Two other issues ACCC has asked its membership to advocate for are the repeal of the sustainable growth rate (SGR) S.2000/H.R. 4015 and support for H.R. 1416, legislation that would eliminate costly cancer drugs from the two percent Medicare sequester.

Educating our legislators—whether it is at the state or national level—is imperative to keep cancer care viable for our programs and patients. So please join me for Capitol Hill Day and at ACCC’s Annual National Meeting as we celebrate 40 years of multidisciplinary collaboration and teamwork. 

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