



Association of Community Cancer Centers

## ONCOLOGY ISSUES

The Journal of the  
Association of Community Cancer Centers

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## FROM THE EDITOR

# Stories Policymakers Need to Hear

BY CHRISTIAN DOWNS, JD, MHA



At the 42nd ACCC Annual Meeting in March, Kavita Patel, MD, MS, of the Brookings Institution, told meeting attendees that providers must help policymakers

understand the demanding intuitive thought process that is part of today's oncology care, as well as the tremendous amount of information that oncology providers must keep up with given the pace and variety of emerging therapies. Cancer care is complex, and if a policymaker were to read just this one edition of *Oncology Issues*, he or she would gain a better understanding of this complexity. From prevention and outreach efforts directed toward at-risk patients to provider-driven solutions to address critical workforce shortages to cutting-edge health IT technology that improves the patient experience—the breadth and scope of the issues oncology providers face on a daily basis is staggering.

Let's start with prevention, specifically provider efforts to ensure that patients have access to tools and resources to help reduce their risk of cancer. In "Health Info on the Go," Nora Katurakes and Charlene Marinelli share how Christiana Care's outreach program provides combination screenings—cancer risk assessment, cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure testing—at a local farmer's market. Policymakers take note: These critical outreach and prevention services *are not reimbursed by payers*.

Our second feature article by Sandy Balentine and Valerie Quigley discusses the development of an oncology nursing fellowship program, which allowed a hospital to fill vacant positions in its busy infusion center. The looming healthcare workforce shortage, exacerbated by the aging Baby Boomer population, is doom and gloom news that policymakers have heard before. Refreshing news to their ears: The story of a proactive, low-cost, provider-driven strategy,

addressing patient, health system, and community needs, developed by The Valley's Blumenthal Cancer Center!

Next, 2015 ACCC Innovator Award Winner Eastern Maine Medical Center Cancer Care shares its experience implementing a real-time location system to streamline patient flow, improve staff efficiency, reduce wait times, and enhance patient safety. A prime example of cancer care providers harnessing the power of technology to implement a cost-effective solution to real-world problems—precisely the type of forward-thinking, patient-centered strategy policymakers are seeking.

Our remaining feature articles also reflect the value that oncology providers bring to the table. In "Oncology's Value-Oriented Framework," Ryan Langdale and Kelley D. Simpson outline a strategic planning process tailored to a cancer program's individual environment and size and oriented around a program's organizational structure, resources, care delivery network, and patient population. Policymakers have mandated a shift to a value-based healthcare environment. As cancer programs make the transition, this article's takeaways offer guidance for short- and long-term strategic planning.

And finally, "ORIEN: Reshaping Cancer Research & Treatment" highlights the Oncology Research Information Exchange Network (ORIEN), a partnership of NCI-designated cancer centers and their community affiliates who share a common protocol and goal of matching cancer patients to the clinical trials that would most benefit them. Precision medicine in practice.

Circling back to Kavita Patel's call for action to educate policymakers about issues affecting the oncology community, I'd say we're on the right track. Now we just need to build on our progress by sharing these resources with our staff, patients, and community stakeholders, including our state and federal representatives. If you need help sharing *your* stories, email ACCC Director of Health Policy Leah Ralph at: [lralph@accc-cancer.org](mailto:lralph@accc-cancer.org).