

Resolving to be Resilient

BY TOM GALLO, MS, MDA



As we enter a new calendar year, now is traditionally the time in our lives when we reflect on the last 12 months, note where we have succeeded, and

determine where we still need to make improvements. The same can also be applied to our workplace—as 2019 is now upon us, we can assess how our cancer programs succeeded in delivering quality cancer care to our patients last year and what we can do even better. For many programs that improvement must begin with us.

In any workplace, burnout is a serious concern. It robs us of our creativity, our patience, and our compassion. Because of the continual interactions we have with patients with serious, often terminal diagnoses, cancer care providers are especially vulnerable to the effects of burnout. According to a 2017 Medscape survey, nearly half of all oncologists reported experiencing symptoms of burnout due to a combination of factors including increased workload. Another study found that one-third of physician assistants in oncology experienced burnout despite high reported rates of job satisfaction.

As members of the multidisciplinary cancer care team, it is crucial that we work together to avoid the fatigue that can rob a vulnerable population of high-quality care. This was the impetus behind my President's Theme of "Reflect, Renew, Reignite: Creating a Resilient Oncology Team in Your Community." At the ACCC 35th National Oncology Conference in Phoenix this past October, we heard from several experts on how best to fight back against burnout and build resilience within cancer care teams. So as we begin a new year, I offer this key advice on building resilience:

- **Choose joy.** Featured speaker Vicki Hess, RN, MS, suggests that we look inward, find what brings us joy at work, and incorporate it into our workload. For some, it might be developing relationships with patients; for others, it may be implementing quality improvement initiatives. Whatever your joys, making them a part of your daily work can help alleviate the symptoms of burnout.
- **Spread appreciation.** According to Hess, one simple way to build resilience is through staff appreciation. It feels good to be praised or recognized for one's work, and it also feels good to express your appreciation for others—a win-win scenario.
- **Let it go.** Negative attitudes and responses typically yield more negativity, exacerbating burnout. Taking a step back and releasing frustration can be a powerful way to enact personal change. On an organizational level, getting chronic complainers involved in problem-solving processes can bring about valuable changes while also reducing individual negativity.
- **Address burnout from the top down.** In a pop-up poll conducted at the National Oncology Conference, 93 percent of attendees reported that their cancer program or practice did not measure staff or clinician burnout. Julie Oehlert, DNP, advised that it will be impossible to hit the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Triple Aim without also improving the health and well-being of staff, something that Oehlert accomplished as chief experience officer at Vidant Health. Says Oehlert, "How we [the healthcare team] experience each other begets the patient experience."

ACCC will continue to work on behalf of oncology providers to discover and promote strategies to improve wellness and foster resilience within the cancer care team. If you have implemented strategies in your cancer program, we'd love to hear about them! Visit accc-cancer.org/home/connect/member-news-submission/ and share your story with us.

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- ▶ *One Best Practice*: Streamlining Workflow, Unifying Staff, and Reducing Redundancy
- ▶ Implementing Medical Scribes in a Community Cancer Center
- ▶ Utilizing Bedside Yoga as a Non-pharmacological Intervention for Cancer Patients
- ▶ ArtsCare: Professional Artists and Musicians as Members of the Multidisciplinary Cancer Care Team
- ▶ Partnering to Deliver Precision Cancer Therapy in the Community
- ▶ The Oncology Pharmacy Navigator: A New Best Practice Model for Managing Medications
- ▶ Combating Rising Drug Prices & Waste Through Drug Vial Optimization
- ▶ Right Place, Right Provider, Right Time: Implementing Our 24-Hour Cancer Clinic
- ▶ Cancer Crushing Prevention and Early Detection
- ▶ Improving Care of Advanced Cancer Patients with a Dedicated Palliative Radiotherapy Team