



The House of Oncology

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As my term as president draws to a close, I am thankful for the many exciting and challenging developments that have taken place this past year. ACCC's many accomplishments have been achieved in large part due to the input of an active, growing, multidisciplinary membership. ACCC staff continue to be consistent in responding to the needs of the membership. ACCC activities and meetings have facilitated communication to and among members and allies throughout the oncology community.

This year has been particularly notable because of the cost-cutting initiatives proposed by HCFA. Stark II, practice expense, and APC regulations have threatened access to the delivery of quality oncology care by proposing seriously decreased oncology reimbursement. Several times we have had to mobilize the entire oncology community, including survivors and their families, to respond to HCFA and members of Congress. ACCC's annual Presidents' Retreat and biannual patient advocacy meetings have been useful forums for sharing the expected results of HCFA cutbacks in terms of limiting patient access to quality community oncology care. The ultimate results of these efforts were thousands of letters to HCFA and members of Congress, which has led HCFA to re-evaluate its course of action...so far. We can hopefully become more proactive in educating policy leaders to prevent the continual assaults on our community cancer programs. In addition, we need to call for new therapies, pharmaceuticals, and protocols to advance the war on cancer.

As a result of these successful programs, ACCC again witnessed a steady growth in 1998 and early 1999. Both the Annual National Meeting and the Oncology Economics Conference set new attendance

records. Additionally, more than 800 physicians, nurses, social workers, and office managers participated in ACCC's regional oncology symposia on legislative and regulatory issues, oncology reimbursement, and psychosocial issues.

ACCC continues to serve as a resource for information on day-to-day cancer program management issues. ACCC's bimonthly *Oncology Issues* reaches 17,000 oncology professionals. Many other ACCC publications enhance quality oncology programs across the nation.

As a practicing radiation oncologist, I am most proud of the continued multidisciplinary nature of ACCC membership and activities. Such diversity enhances and enriches the "House of Oncology," making our representative voice more effective and clarifying our mission as we strive for accessible, quality patient care.

An important result of our continued growth is the ability to coordinate important issues across all our constituencies to HCFA and members of Congress. We can be proud of all our collective efforts to preserve the high level of quality and access to oncology management in the United States, efforts that solidified a unified front among a wide range of oncology advocacy organizations. It is my belief that through ACCC's continued efforts, the "House of Oncology" is healthier now than ever.

Robert L. (Larry) White