



To Dialogue...or not

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FACT ACCC provides information about approaches for the effective management, delivery, and financing of comprehensive cancer care through its national meetings, regional symposia, and publication of oncology patient management guidelines, standards for cancer programs, critical pathways, oncology-related drugs and indications, and *Oncology Issues*.

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FROM THE EDITOR



To Dialogue...Or Not

by Lee E. Mortenson, D.P.A.

I was saddened to read how the efforts of the National Dialogue on Cancer were trashed in *The Cancer Letter* recently. *The Cancer Letter's* take on the National Dialogue: The American Cancer Society in disguise is trying to dominate the entire industry, shutting out dissenters, especially advocates. A small, closed group is determining direction. Advocates, who should be in control, are being kept away from efforts to renew the National Cancer Act...and so on.

Bullfeathers!

Recognizing a lost opportunity after "THE MARCH," national ACS with NCI, CDC, and PhRMA assembled leaders from the national policy community to generate a shared agenda that we could jointly back. Leaders were recruited from all the groups you would like to have supporting a national cancer effort: major media, politics, patient advocates, researchers, government, and provider groups.

I have been to a couple of these meetings and have several observations. First, this is a name-brand group, from Vince DeVita and Rick Klausner to former President and Mrs. Bush and Sen. Dianne Feinstein. People who I respect as political and media authorities are not grandstanding; they are sitting in a room and talking about how we can bring the resources of the nation to bear on our common cause.

Second, the range of people and organizations is impressive. *The Cancer Letter* suggested patient advocates were excluded. Well, Nancy Brinker is clearly involved. Dean Gesme from NCCS has been there every time. And, it is impossi-

ble to exclude Helene Brown, Pearl Moore, Carl Dixon, Peggy McCarthy, John Durant, Sen. Connie Mack, and many, many others at the table from the ranks of advocates for patients.

Third, I've learned something at every meeting, simply because having the leadership of a hundred cancer organizations on the same campus for a day and a half, gives us all a chance to meet with other leaders and discuss common issues.

Fourth, will the Dialogue attendees all agree on common priorities? Not likely. The group is too diverse. But I bet a large number of like-minded individuals and organizations will work through the Dialogue to accomplish significant improvements for cancer patients.

Fifth, is this the ACS in disguise? Somewhat, *and* there is new blood from the cancer community, the national political scene, and the national media. While ACS has been opening doors and using its money as initial capitalization, its agendas are not the only ones being heard at these meetings. This is not a weak-kneed crowd.

So, is the Dialogue a failure? No, it's a dialogue. Are there people who don't like it? Sure. When you have this many organizations with vested interests, you have people used to control, worrying about who has the helm.

Yet, working together is a good idea. Dialogue can't hurt any of us. In working together, there is great strength. If your organization doesn't want to play, you might ask your leadership what makes it so special and so proud.

Let's pool our resources and see if we can get the job done faster. Let's not just talk. Let's listen. ☐