President’s Message

It’s hard to believe that summer is coming to an end and that the TOPS Membership Conference is right around the corner. This year’s Conference will take place at the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt University on Friday, October 9.

As is our tradition, we have planned an excellent program that will provide an array of presentations on the economics, public policy, and clinical aspects of cancer care and appeal to all members of the cancer care team. We have a stellar line-up of speakers and state-of-the-art topics for you and your oncology colleagues. We hope you will agree!

The program will kick off with a presentation by Nancy Davenport-Ennis, President and CEO of the Patient Advocate Foundation, on a most timely subject: “National Healthcare Reform.” Equally timely will be an “Update of National Legislation and Regulations” presented by Ted Okon, Executive Director of the Community Oncology Alliance.

Two clinical sessions are planned: one on the “Management of Multiple Myeloma” by Ivan M. Borrello, MD, who is traveling to Nashville from Johns Hopkins Hospital, and the other on “Lung Models in the Management of Oncology Drugs and Biologicals,” presented by Denise K. Pierce, President of DK Pierce & Associates.

In addition to the Conference’s extensive educational program, there will be numerous opportunities for you to exchange ideas with colleagues and industry partners.

On another note, I’m sure you are aware that the end of August marks the transition from our current Medicare carrier, Cigna Medicare, to Cahaba GBA. To ensure that oncologists in Tennessee and their patients are prepared for this transition and to minimize any possible disruption in services and payment for these services, TOPS is initiating a dialogue with Cahaba and its Medical Director, Dr. Greg McKinney. At the onset, we are concerned about disparities in Local Coverage Decisions (LCDs) between the current carrier and Cahaba, such as those concerning ESAs in the treatment of anemia for chronic disease. Go to the TOPS website, www.tops-tennessee.com, to see the letter TOPS wrote to Dr. McKinney welcoming him as Medical Director of Jurisdiction 10, and alerting him to TOPS’ concerns about ESAs. I will keep you posted regarding the progress of this dialogue.

See you in Nashville on October 9th!

Patrick B. Murphy, MD, President

A Hot, Busy Summer is Predicted for Healthcare

The summer of 2009 is turning out to be one of the busiest for healthcare-related issues that we have seen in a long time. Everything from healthcare reform to regulatory updates to changes in commercial reimbursement is on the radar screen. The following is a short list of some of the hot issues ACCC is working on this summer:

Healthcare Reform

Congress has adjourned for its August recess, but is still actively working on a number of versions of a healthcare reform bill that it hopes to have passed by the end of the year. This is a short timeframe in which to work, and despite the setbacks earlier over the high cost of the reform plans and the specifics surrounding the public plan, Congress is still attempting to abide by this framework. The reform efforts are expected to cover more of the uninsured and underinsured in the US, while at the same time trimming other areas of Medicare in the hope of saving some money.

Other Healthcare-Related Bills

There are a number of other healthcare- and oncology-related bills that are taking a back burner to healthcare reform right now. The Kennedy Cancer Care ALERT Act is one such bill, which will not be addressed until healthcare reform is finished. Efforts are being made to include other bills, such as S. 1221 and H.R. 1392, that would remove the prompt pay discount from the Average Sales Price, in the larger healthcare reform bill, since no stand alone, smaller issue health bill is likely to pass this year outside of the more encompassing healthcare reform bill. We hope that an SGR fix also is included in healthcare reform, but if not, a separate SGR bill will likely happen by the end of the year.

Regulatory Updates

CMS recently released rules for hospital outpatient departments and the physician fee schedule. ACCC has summarized the rules and these are available to OSSN State Societies from the ACCC website. Drug and administration reimbursement, evaluation and management reimbursement, and imaging rates are all determined by these rules. The drug and drug administration rates in the Hospital Outpatient Department are proposed to remain about the same, while drug administration may see major cuts in the physician office setting. Medical Oncologists are facing a 6 percent reduction next year and Radiation Oncologists may face a 19 percent cut. ACCC is working with the State Societies and other advocacy groups to halt these cuts.

Private Payer Challenges

Members are reporting an increase in the number of reimbursement challenges they are facing with private payers. The trend seems to be an increase in the number of prior authorizations required for both medical and radiation oncology. In addition, payers seem to be reducing reimbursement in other areas. Please email me at mfarber@accc-cancer.org about any issues you are having with private payers.

Matthew Farber, MA Manager, Provider Economics and Public Policy, ACCC
Interaction with Industry: Different Focus, Increased Value

Although the healthcare landscape is in the midst of change, corporate alliances between the oncology state societies, pharmaceutical companies, and other support organizations continue to be valuable and mutually beneficial for everyone. The new PhRMA guidelines and current economic conditions have all contributed to investigating new areas of support, reevaluating approaches to funders, and using different techniques to navigate grant preparation and submission, where the process seems to be forever changing.

TOPS continues to revise the way of rethinking about its programs and collaboration with industry partners. We are now renaming the exhibit hall and calling it the Resource Center with the aim that it will become more about education and information and less emphasis on the “selling” of the products.

As a medical association, we need to remind everyone that the interaction with manufacturers provides insight, education about their current products, their pipeline, and their patient assistance programs. Our supporters, in turn, have the opportunity to tell their story and hopefully help us solve quandaries and provide the best possible cancer options for patients. See you in the Resource Center!

Linda Jackier Schugar, Manager, Corporate Relations
lschugar@accc-cancer.org

Drugs in the News from TOPS Corporate Partners*

Novartis (East Hanover, N.J.) announced that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Afinitor® (everolimus) tablets for patients with advanced renal cell carcinoma (RCC) after failure of treatment with Sutent® (sunitinib) or Nexavar® (sorafenib). For more information, go to: http://www. afinitor.com/index.jsp?site=PC013498&source=0

Eli Lilly and Company (Indianapolis, Ind.) announced that the company received a fourth approval from the U.S. FDA for Alimta® (pemetrexed for injection). The latest approval is for Alimta as a maintenance therapy for locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) specifically for patients who received Avastin plus interferon-alfa plus placebo. For more information, go to: http://www.gene.com/gene/news/press-releases/display. do?method=detail&id=12307.

New label information on the cancer treatment Erbitux® (cetuximab) will state there is no evidence the drug works on a minority of colon cancer patients with a specific genetic mutation. Eli Lilly and Company and Bristol-Myers Squibb Company announced that the addition to the drug’s label will state that studies have not shown that Erbitux helps patients whose tumors have a mutated gene, or biomarker, called KRAS. Amgen Inc. announced a similar label change for its cancer drug Vectibix® (panitumumab). For more information, go to: http://www. accc-cancer.org/ mediaaroom/media_newsfeed.asp#labelchange.

*TOPS Corporate Partners (as of 6/30/09)

Platinum
Amgen

Gold
Abraxis BioScience
AstraZeneca
Bayer Healthcare Pharmaceuticals/Onyx
Centocor Ortho Biotech
Genentech
Novartis Oncology
sanofi-aventis

Silver
Glaxo SmithKline
Lilly Oncology
Mckesson Specialty Care Solutions
Millennium, The Takeda Oncology Company

Thank you for the value you add to TOPS!

For more information about Tennessee Oncology Practice Society (TOPS)
go to: www.tops-tennessee.com
or call: 301-984-9496, ext. 218

Upcoming 2009 Events:
TOPS: Membership Conference.
October 9, Nashville, TN