



The Dog Days of Summer

by Christian Downs, JD, MHA

The Value of ACCC Membership

Here's what your peers
are saying about ACCC...

"The idea of creating the position of a patient financial advocate at Mountain States Tumor Institute stemmed from an article in *Oncology Issues*. Return on investment was immediate."

—Jessie Modlin, PharmD,
St. Luke's Mountain
States Tumor Institute,
Boise, Idaho

"We participated in ACCC's Cancer Program Improvement Project. Our staff immediately created an action plan based on information presented at the one-day seminar. In one year's time we went from an 88 percent error rate in charge capture to less than 10 percent. Today, we are capturing 95 percent of all available charges."

—Connie Selle, CPbt, RPbt,
HealthEast Cancer Care
and Pharmacy Services,
Maplewood, Minnesota

"ACCC is a strong advocate for the entire cancer care team when it comes to working with CMS and Congress on issues of patient access to quality cancer care."

—Susan Wright,
Cancer Program
Information Coordinator,
Hartford Hospital Cancer Program,
Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center,
Hartford, Connecticut

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Remember years ago when summertime actually meant the living was easy? In Washington, D.C., the federal government essentially shut down from roughly mid-June until after Labor Day. The rest of the country operated on a "school calendar." Everything just seemed to slow down until the kids went back to school in September. How times have changed. Today some schools operate year-round. And, unfortunately for all of us, the federal government really only shuts down the last two weeks of August.

The situation is no different for community cancer centers. In addition to caring for patients year-round, your program likely has initiatives going on all through the "dog days" of summer—perhaps refining your patient navigation program or building a new addition on your chemo suite or finally gearing up to implement that electronic medical record system.

So how do you handle all this activity *and* the hot, hazy days of summer? First, sign up for ACCC's Fall Oncology Economics Conference in cool, comfortable, Minneapolis, Minnesota. There you will hear all the latest information on healthcare reform, Medicare's RAC program, the final rules that establish payments in both the hospital and physician office setting, and much more. In addition to sharing anecdotes from your summer, you will also have the opportunity to network with colleagues on issues such as physician employment arrangements, effective use of nurse practitioners and physician assistants, and strategies for negotiating with third-party payers.

Next, pour yourself a tall, frosted glass of lemonade and check out this edition of *Oncology Issues*. As usual

ACCC's journal features topical articles that affect the way we deliver cancer care today and will in the near future. Read about two current practical approaches to characterize cancer cell genomes: FISH (fluorescent *in situ* hybridization) and CGH (comparative genomic hybridization).

Or perhaps your cancer program is looking to improve its imaging services? Authors Cat Taylor and Chad Schaeffer offer practical strategies for growing patient volume, increasing referrals, and improving patient satisfaction.

And for those of you struggling with EHR implementation, Wilshire Oncology Medical Group shows how this technology can result in ROI,

improving communication, quality of care, use of evidence-based guidelines, research programs, and billing and coding efforts.

Finally, Brian Larson, RPh, touches on the emerging role of pharmacists in private oncology practice. As cancer care delivery becomes more and more complex, these professionals are positioned to help with the intersection of economics and clinical care.

And where would summer be without a little "light" reading? So turn to the middle of this issue and our special gatefold on "Cancer Care Trends in Community Cancer Centers." We've taken our 40-page report and pulled out some of the most interesting survey findings. These snapshots of information—accessible and presented in an eye-catching, reader-friendly format—provide a peek at what your colleagues and competitors are doing.

So we can't turn back the clock to the days when summer actually meant summer. Still, we can sit back, take a long sip of lemonade, and maybe remember how to relax a bit. ☺

