

## Advocacy 365

BY LEAH RALPH



**O**n the Association of Community Cancer Centers' (ACCC) Capitol Hill Day, March 14, an energetic contingent of ACCC members walked the halls of Congress speaking up on behalf of access to quality cancer care in nearly 100 congressional meetings with legislators. Thanks to our dedicated group of advocates, ACCC reached 44 unique house districts and 52 unique senate districts. At each visit, ACCC members left information on ACCC advocacy issues and offered to be a resource on the real-world impact of policy on cancer care delivery in their communities.

Some first-time advocates were surprised to find that ACCC Hill Day meetings are so individualized and at the interest from legislators in hearing their perspective from the front lines of cancer care delivery.

"Engaged, active listening," is how Angela DeCillis, DNP, RN, NE-BC, from Newark Beth Israel, RWJ Barnabus Health System, described the response of legislative staff during the New Jersey delegation's meetings.

### What Happens Next?

Back in the home office, the ACCC policy team follows up with each congressional office, offering to answer any questions, provide additional information, and serve as a resource on the challenges that ACCC members are facing in the delivery of quality, patient-centered cancer care.

ACCC thanks everyone who traveled to Washington, D.C., to join in this year's Capitol Hill Day. We invite all ACCC members to get involved and make your voice heard. Advocacy takes 365-day-a-year awareness and effort, and ACCC's policy team is here to help you advocate for your program and your patients on both the federal and state level. In this time of healthcare reform, policy mandates, and pressing access to care concerns, speaking up on issues affecting cancer care on both the state and national levels is critical.

For a powerful example of proactive advocacy on the state level, read the "Views" column in this issue. Legislative efforts are underway in many states aimed at addressing the country's serious opioid crisis, yet some overly broad legislation may not account for the need to avoid harm to

the cancer patient population so that cancer-related pain may be appropriately treated. The Tennessee Oncology Practice Society has served as a resource for its state legislature on this nuanced issue, advocating tirelessly for cancer patients in their state.

### Stay Informed, Stay Involved

The ACCC policy team is here to help make staying informed and involved easy. Look for policy updates in ACCConnect and the Delegate Repartee newsletter, on the ACCC website ([accc-cancer.org](http://accc-cancer.org)), and through ACCC Advocacy Alerts.

Reach out to the ACCC policy staff with your policy questions, concerns, and insights. Take advantage of the comment periods offered to rulemaking and requests for information from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Invite your elected officials for a tour of your cancer program and show them how your program is serving their constituency. Next year, join us in Washington, D.C., for Capitol Hill Day. Finally, share your advocacy stories with us.

*Leah Ralph is ACCC Director of Health Policy.* 