



Association of Community Cancer Centers

ONCOLOGY ISSUES

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FROM THE EDITOR.....

A Fond Farewell

BY JENNIE R. CREWS, MD, MMM, FACP



This is my last column as Editor-in-Chief of *Oncology Issues*, and it has been a privilege to serve in this inaugural role. As I reflect over the past three years and the topics covered in previous columns, I am amazed by the challenges that oncology has weathered and the changes we have navigated.

Together, we have tackled payment reform with the introduction of the Oncology Care Model, wider adoption of value-based care, and continued focus on price transparency. We continue to face issues of drug pricing and financial toxicity that threaten the sustainability of cancer care. We have witnessed the explosion of information, big data, and precision medicine and contemplated ways to harness technology to better serve our patients and practices. Incorporating predictive analytics has allowed us to identify high-risk patients and deploy tactics to optimize resource utilization. We have seen immunotherapy become standard across many tumor types and have redefined what it means to be a cancer survivor due to the success of this therapy. We have struggled to increase access to clinical trials to bring life-saving care to more patients, particularly underrepresented minorities and those in rural areas.

This past year has brought previously unseen challenges with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We responded with major re-engineering of clinical care, including screening measures and routine use of personal protective equipment. We expanded use of telemedicine to service patients safely and are envisioning its continued use in this COVID-19 era. Many of

us experienced financial hardship and are still struggling with recovery and the uncertainty of how COVID will play out over the coming year. Our specialty is bracing for the possibility of patients presenting with more advanced stages of disease due to delayed screenings and postponed evaluation of symptoms. (For practical strategies to help you prepare for what many are forecasting to a surge in patient volume, turn to page 56 and read “After the Outbreak: Preparing for the Return of Cancer Cases.”)

Though our present and future challenges are daunting, I am reminded of the theme of my very first column—collaboration. ACCC is unique in its diversity of oncology specialties represented: providers, pharmacists, nurses, social workers, medical nutritionists, and more. ACCC membership includes the spectrum of practice models from small private practices to large academic institutions. This diversity brings a variety of perspectives and sometimes differences of opinion. However, our diverse membership also offers opportunity to join forces in developing creative solutions for our patients and programs. With the challenges and changes we have faced and the ones yet to come, we truly are better together.

Now, please join me in welcoming my successor, Sibel Blau, MD. *Oncology Issues’* incoming Editor-in-Chief is an oncologist and medical director at Northwest Medical Specialties, Tacoma, Wash. Dr. Blau is immediate-past president of the Washington State Medical Oncology Society and one of the founding members of the Quality Cancer Care Alliance, a clinically integrated network of seven oncology practices across the country. She is also a friend, a colleague, and an innovator who exemplifies the value of women leaders in our field. Welcome, Dr. Blau. I know our members will benefit from your expertise and insights.