The Future is Bright

BY RANDALL A. OYER, MD

I’d like to start my last column by thanking ACCC, its board of trustees, and all of you for allowing me to serve as president of this collaborative, forward-thinking association. Assuming the ACCC presidency in March of 2020, just as the COVID-19 public health emergency went into effect, was certainly a dramatic way to enter office. That said, I am pleased with how much we have accomplished these last 12 months—despite the nationwide shutdown and ongoing pandemic.

As I end my tenure as ACCC president, I want to thank everyone for their dedication to the President’s Theme “Community Oncology Can Close the Gap in Cancer Research.” Those of us who work in oncology have long understood that clinical trials are the gold standard of treatment for patients with cancer. This year the entire world had first-row seats to the life-saving nature of clinical trials through the herculean efforts to develop and bring to market several COVID-19 vaccines.

These scientific and medical breakthroughs do not happen in a vacuum. They occur when key stakeholders come to the table with their combined expertise, knowledge, and resources to collaborate on a common goal. This happened for ACCC this year with its collaboration with ASCO (American Society of Clinical Oncology) to foster racial and ethnic minority participation in cancer treatment trials to better reflect the diversity of people at risk for or living with cancer. This year the entire world had first-row seats to the lifesaving nature of clinical trials through the herculean efforts to develop and bring to market several COVID-19 vaccines.

Though the last 12 months brought unprecedented change to oncology, healthcare, our country, and the world at large, it also brought us together to improve the future for our patients and their families. And the future is bright. We can and will improve our response to emergent diseases, like COVID-19. We can and will improve patient access to clinical trials. We can and will improve health equity overall. Personally, I can think of no one more capable or more prepared to lead us in these efforts than 2021-2022 ACCC President Krista Nelson, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C, BCD. As program manager of Quality and Research, Cancer Support Services and Compassion at Providence Cancer Institute, Krista can help us all improve our empathy, mindfulness, active listening, and many other skills that are necessary to make the improvements I just highlighted. Please join me in welcoming Krista. I know you will give her all the support, resources, and tools she will need to succeed.

‘Til next time, I wish you health, happiness, and success in the year to come.

O1