

ONCOLOGY ISSUES

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FROM THE EDITOR

Remembering Our “Why”

BY MARK LIU, MHA



so, for my first column, I want to focus on the importance of remembering our “why” and take the opportunity to share a little bit about myself.

When I reflect on why I chose to work in healthcare and, more specifically, oncology, my interest started when I signed up to be an EMT (emergency medical technician) and a hospice volunteer in college. As an eager student, I wanted more experience in care delivery and completing the training to become a certified EMT was one way to gain critical life skills. When I showed up on the first day of hospice training, I was the youngest volunteer in the room. The time I spent learning how I could best support patients and their caregivers at their end of life was both an honor and life changing experience.

Unfortunately, it is rare to come across anyone today who has not been impacted by cancer. My “why” for working in healthcare was cemented in my work as a care coordinator at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. Reminiscing on my time in that role, it remains one of my favorite jobs. My days started as early as 6:45 AM, which required me to wake up at 4:30 AM due to my long commute. Despite these early starts, a wave of purpose came over me each day when I walked into the building and worked alongside my colleagues.

I felt privileged that patients, caregivers, and family members trusted me at such a sensitive time in patients’ lives. With all the patients coming through our cancer center each day, the job came with a roller coaster

The COVID-19 pandemic put us all to the test—a test for which we had little to no preparation. As we continue to move forward, we cannot ignore how this global pandemic changed us all. And of emotions—“highs” like the high-fives we shared at good news and “lows” like the gentle hand holding or hugs we shared at difficult news. The stories and experiences. The faces and personalities. They remain with me today, informing my understanding of the disparities and challenges faced by those trying to manage their cancer care. These memories continue to fuel my passion to work in oncology. In my current role at Mount Sinai Health System & Tisch Cancer Institute, also in New York City, I call on all my past experiences to strategically plan and implement initiatives that ensure equitable cancer care for patients, caregivers, and clinical teams.

As we move forward in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to operate within a complex environment that is complicated by many different pressures and constraints on cancer care delivery. As editor-in-chief over the next two years, my hope is that *Oncology Issues* continues to be your go-to resource to help unravel these complexities and serve as a source of inspiration to provide the high-quality care for which we all strive. I would love to hear from you—our readers—about the issues you face, as well as the innovative solutions and best practices you have implemented. You can do so by applying for a 2023 ACCC Innovator Award at: acc-cancer.org/innovator, contributing to *Oncology Issues* (email the managing editor, mmarino@acc-cancer.org), or attending the upcoming ACCC 49th Annual Meeting and Cancer Center Business Summit, March 8-10, in Washington, D.C. These engagement opportunities help highlight the extraordinary work you are doing at your cancer program or practice and elevate our entire field. 🗨️