

ONCOLOGY ISSUES

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FROM THE EDITOR

Bringing Health Equity to the Forefront

BY MARK LIU, MHA



As editor-in-chief of *Oncology Issues*, I had the privilege of attending the January ACCC Board Retreat to think through the association's strategic plan over the next few years,

including the identification of key priority areas. It is an honor to be part of an organization that is full of innovative healthcare leaders, who are passionate about making a lasting impact in oncology, and it was wonderful to be back together in-person for this retreat. We started off the weekend with a landscape assessment on every part of the association and discussed strategies around advocacy and educational programming. Reflecting on the core values and mission of ACCC, we brainstormed what an ideal future state of oncology could be through small group discussions, pulling ideas together as a full group. We then worked toward identifying an extensive list of potential milestones and goals to keep us on track and accountable over the next few years.

While this was just the start of a year-long strategic planning effort, I am excited for the direction ACCC leadership is envisioning and to be able to share more as the plan is finalized. The topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as access to care, were a key focus in all our discussions, and I appreciate how committed ACCC is to addressing health disparities in cancer care delivery, clinical trials, and access. In the last few years, it has been impossible to ignore the disparate outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic, the critical need to address social determinants of health, and how the murder of George Floyd sparked a global movement against racism and intolerance. These tragic events have brought to light the urgency to address systemic racism in our society.

As a diverse healthcare leader, this work is incredibly important to me personally and

professionally. I identify with the LGBTQ+ and Asian communities, and I am also a first-generation American. My own experience gives me greater appreciation for the diversity in the world. Yet, understanding that this is only one perspective, I am working to discover what unintentional biases I may have in how I approach my own work. There is much to learn about other origins of inequalities, ways in which we can address these inequalities, and how to improve the health status of our society. I often think about how diverse—and often underserved—communities navigate an already complicated healthcare system, without yet layering on the serious illness of cancer.

Coming out of the ACCC strategic planning retreat, one goal is to have a future issue of *Oncology Issues* solely dedicated to the important work happening across the country on ways healthcare organizations are approaching diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as access to care. This hard work needs to happen at the individual and organizational level. If you would like to be involved, email the managing editor of the journal at mmarino@accc-cancer.org. Be a voice for the underserved communities in your area and share how your organization is addressing healthcare disparities and improving equity and access for all. 🗣️