Data Analyst: The Newest Member of the Multidisciplinary Team

BY MARK LIU, MHA

It's hard to believe that another ACCC National Oncology Conference (NOC) is in the books. Congratulations again to all the 2023 ACCC Innovator Award winners! Thank you for making the time to come to Austin, Texas, and share your work with the wider cancer care community. For those who could not attend this year's NOC, look for articles from each of the 6 ACCC Award winners starting in the next *Oncology Issues*.

Outside of these thought-provoking sessions, I always enjoy the opportunity to meet new people and reconnect with colleagues from across the country. The NOC is always such a great way to build your professional network with members across all disciplines yet working towards the same goals and facing similar challenges.

While these challenges can feel insurmountable at times, attending meetings like the NOC is where I am able to re-energize myself. There's something to be said about how helpful ACCC members are in supporting one another. A prime example is the "Women Leaders in Oncology: A Panel Discussion" on Friday, Oct. 6, which kicked off the last day of this amazing conference. Personally, I found it such an incredibly powerful session, hearing from such a diverse and talented group of leaders in healthcare and how these successful women have navigated and nurtured their own careers. They shared their diverse career paths with such honesty and vulnerability it inspired an equally open dialogue with members of the audience during the Q&A. It truly was a session that sparked overdue conversations about the importance of leadership development of women, and the 90 minutes just flew by!

As usual, there were so many takeaways from the NOC that it's challenging to zero in on one, but here goes. From my perspective, several sessions reinforced the importance and power of data and how cancer programs and practices that want to succeed under value-based care and alternative payment models should strongly consider hiring an FTE data analyst as the "newest" member of the multidisciplinary cancer care team. While most hospitals have a dedicated information technology department, it is not just about analyzing and bringing together different data sets but also about having the oncology knowledge to translate that information into meaningful and actionable insights for cancer programs.

I heard this insight repeated at ASCO's Quality Care Symposium a few weeks later, with multiple examples of bringing together clinicians and data analysts to measurably impact and improve patient care.

I lead a small but mighty team of data analysts, and it has been profoundly rewarding to see the impact this team has made on cancer care delivery at my organization. So, when forecasting and making hiring decisions in 2024, I urge you to think outside of the traditional disciplines and specialties and bring on a data analyst(s) dedicated to your oncology service line. **OI**

A Message of Gratitude to our Corporate Members

We wish to acknowledge and thank our corporate members for their ongoing support and commitment to ACCC throughout the year. Our annual initiatives, conferences and programs are able to thrive because your organization is an important part of our community.

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Community Collaboration in Cancer Care: A Bridge to Hope and Healing

BY OLALEKAN AJAYI, PHARMD, MBA

The journey of anyone diagnosed with cancer is daunting, but it is not a journey one must travel alone. When communities and the oncology workforce come together, they can create a powerful support system that empowers individuals to face cancer with resilience and hope.

One of the most significant benefits of community collaboration is access to information and resources. Community organizations can serve as valuable hubs for disseminating knowledge about cancer prevention, early detection, and available treatments. This proactive approach can help reduce cancer incidence rates by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and regular screenings. Additionally, community-based programs can help patients and their families navigate the complex healthcare system, ensuring they receive timely and appropriate care.

In many cases, individuals facing a cancer diagnosis experience a sense of isolation and fear. When this happens, community support groups and networks become invaluable. Connecting patients with others who have walked a similar path can provide emotional support, reduce anxiety, and foster a sense of belonging. The oncology workforce can play a pivotal role in facilitating these connections, ensuring that patients receive not only medical treatment but also the emotional and psychological support they need.

Financial toxicity is another significant challenge for patients with cancer. The cost of cancer treatment can be exorbitant, and many struggle to cover medical expenses while maintaining their quality of life. Community-based initiatives, such as fundraising events and financial assistance programs, can alleviate some of this burden. By partnering with communities, the oncology workforce can help identify and leverage these resources, ensuring that no patient must choose between their health and financial stability.

Vulnerable populations often face barriers to accessing cancer care, including limited access to healthcare facilities, transportation, lack of health insurance, and cultural or linguistic barriers. Working closely with community leaders and organizations can help identify and address these disparities, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal access to quality cancer care.

In the era of personalized medicine, community engagement is critical in advancing cancer research. By involving communities in clinical trials and research initiatives, the oncology workforce can ensure that research outcomes reflect the diverse populations affected by cancer. This diversity not only enhances the generalizability of findings but also fosters a sense of ownership and participation among community members.

The importance of the oncology workforce partnering with communities in providing cancer care cannot be overstated. This collaboration goes beyond medical treatment; it encompasses a holistic approach to cancer care that addresses the physical, emotional, financial, and social needs of patients and their families.

As a cancer care provider, I encourage you to know the organizations in your community that you can partner with to make significant strides in cancer prevention, early detection, treatment, and research. You will find that your efforts will not just be about treating cancer; it will be about building a compassionate, inclusive, and equitable healthcare ecosystem where no one with cancer gets left behind. **OI**