FROM THE EDITOR

A Meeting of Like Minds

BY JENNIE R. CREWS, MD, MMM, FACCP

One of the benefits of being an ACCC Past President is that one’s official duties at a conference are limited, and one has time to take in the sessions and spend time catching up with colleagues and friends. I took full advantage of these benefits at the 45th ACCC Annual Meeting & Cancer Business Summit, held Mar. 20-22 in Washington, D.C. My list of highlights from the meeting includes a glimpse into the future of oncology care, the promise of technology in enhancing care delivery, and the newly added Deep Dive Workshops covering a variety of topics.

In the meeting’s opening session, healthcare futurist Joe Flowers and Allen Lichter, MD, FASCO, showed us the potential future state of oncology care. Flowers surmised that the future of oncology will include value-based care but in potentially new models such as “spot auctions” of services and a focus on population health and community wellness. Dr. Lichter predicted seven trends that would influence oncology care over the next decade, including:

- Challenges in screening and detection, where more sensitive and less invasive tests will allow us to detect cancer earlier but require us to determine which of those cancers will be life-threatening.
- Escalating drug costs, which will challenge us to re-examine the role of pharmacokinetics in specifying appropriate dose.
- An emphasis on the social determinants of health, which will challenge us to move outside of our sphere of expertise and push us to address disparities in housing, nutrition, and education.

The future of oncology also depends on harnessing technology, and several sessions highlighted the role that advances in digital health, big data, and artificial intelligence and machine learning will play in oncology care delivery. For example, we learned how Sarah Cannon Cancer Center has leveraged technology to standardize nurse navigation and how big data can enhance efficiency in operating room scheduling. We heard about the promise and pitfalls of machine learning in guiding cancer care and how wearables and embedded devices may assist in reporting patient symptoms in real time to improve management of conditions and side effects.

My final highlight of the meeting was the smaller Deep Dive Workshops, which focused on immuno-oncology, strategic partnerships, oncology staff resiliency, and improving patient education and engagement. In small groups, participants brainstormed ideas to transform cancer care going forward and made actionable steps toward improving the status quo. The format of these workshops allowed for more interactive discussion and easier sharing of best practices. Be on the lookout for more Deep Dive Workshops at ACCC meetings in the future.

For me, the ability to take time away from daily duties and stressors and immerse myself in learning is one of the most valuable reasons to attend an ACCC meeting. Taking dedicated time to inform myself on the most pressing issues in cancer care delivery, as well as potential strategies and solutions for overcoming them, is crucial in providing the best possible care to our patients. The other is connecting with colleagues—to learn, to share, and to realize that the future of oncology is bright because together we are stronger.

For more from the 45th Annual Meeting & Cancer Center Business Summit, including blog posts and press coverage, visit accc-cancer.org/amccbs.