The Voice of the Clinical Practice Committee: More Than a Single Story

By Daniel M. Hayes, MD

On a glorious Fourth of July on the coast of Maine, I began to wonder what the year would bring for the Clinical Practice Committee (CPC) and for oncology practice. Thanks to some great weather, most of the east coast was beginning to heat up, and folks were enjoying those lazy, crazy days of summer. Amid the sails that dotted Saco Bay, the soft breezes through the marsh grasses, and the ocean's loss of its frigid surprise for those who crowed onto the beaches, the work of the CPC has begun in earnest. Having been energized during the ASCO Annual Meeting, where there were many voices of change, debate, challenge, and opportunity, the CPC has set an ambitious work agenda.

My first task as the newly installed chair of the CPC was to present our work to the ASCO Committee Chairs, whose efforts, time, talent, passion, and ambition form the focus of commitment for the mission of ASCO. At the Annual Meeting, I heard reports about new technologies; improved and efficient communication; and new tools for education, leadership, partnership, scientific discoveries, treatment breakthroughs, advocacy, marketing, and stewardship. It is clear to me that we who care for patients must not only succeed in practice, but must also integrate practice into the entirety of the ASCO community.

During the month after the meeting in Chicago, the CPC leadership and staff prepared proposed topics for educational sessions for the 2011 Annual Meeting. We proposed topics that are of interest to those who practice, regardless of setting. These include "A Forum on Policy, Business, and Reimbursement Trends in 2011"; "Increasing Awareness and Participation in Clinical Trials"; "Assessing the Financial Health of Oncology Practices"; "QOPI Use in Various Practice Settings"; and "The Oncology Pharmacy-Office, Infusions Center, Practice Dispensary, Hospital Clinics." The CPC leadership seeks best practices, successful processes, experienced pathways, and spirited participants whose presentations will encourage excellence and inspiration. Although the selection process for these sessions is competitive, the effort creates high standards and a valuable agenda for the CPC to work with over the year.

As the Carrier Advisory Committee (CAC) transitioned into the Medicare Administrative Contractors Advisory Group, the CPC and ASCO State Societies cohosted another Annual Net-

work Meeting with the American Society of Hematology. Hematology and oncology CAC members from all 15 Medicare Administrative Contractors jurisdictions gathered with contractor medical directors to discuss the beginnings of the implementation of health care reform, review local and national Medicare coverage policies, review the challenges of documentation in the era of the electronic medical record, and understand the role of compendia in validating off-label use of chemotherapy drugs in cancer care. Each of these tasks is taken up by CAC representatives regularly as they represent you and your ASCO State Society; they are intensely involved in these efforts and are truly unsung heroes. They carry the CPC presence into the policy debates, pilots and trials, and coverage decisions that allow better cancer care to be provided to patients. For without coverage policy that determines reimbursement, a practitioner is hard pressed to deliver care.

The CPC Steering Subcommittee set the agenda for the fall meeting of the CPC and continues to drive a number of initiatives, including strategically driven government relations advocacy in an era of turbulent partisan politics; a Private Payer Initiative conference, which will bring payers and providers into a dialogue that should create improved collaboration, if not the seeds for partnership; a task force to help ASCO understand the forces and challenges that shape the practice of oncology; and the transformation of the Practice Management Curriculum into an educational effort to provide a standard of excellence for practice administrators and staffs.

So what will the CPC work on as the fall brings a new term? We certainly will be doing all that we can to promote and provide the best care possible for patients with cancer. All of ASCO is behind us, and the CPC appreciates all the help you will give.

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Corresponding author: Daniel M. Hayes, MD, Maine Center for Cancer Medicine, 100 Campus Dr, Ste 108, Scarborough, MD 04074-9308; e-mail: hayesd@mccm.org.

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