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## ONCOLOGY ISSUES

The Journal of the  
Association of Cancer Care Centers

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*Oncology Issues* serves the multidisciplinary specialty of oncology care and cancer program management.

*Oncology Issues* (ISSN: 1046-3356) is published bimonthly for a total of 6 issues per year by the Association of Cancer Care Centers (ACCC), 1801 Research Blvd, Suite 400, Rockville, MD 20850-3184, USA. Copyright © 2025 by the Association of Cancer Care Centers. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, transmitted, or disseminated in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the publisher.

## FROM THE EDITOR .....

# Prioritizing Equitable Supportive Services

BY KRISTA NELSON, LCSW, OSW-C, FAOSW, FAPOS, FACCC



**A**s I write this column, I am filled with deep gratitude for the remarkable individuals who make up the oncology care community. In times of growing uncertainty, increasing complexity, and

evolving care needs, your unwavering dedication to patients and their families stands as a testament to the strength of this field.

Oncology is more than medicine—it is a commitment to walking alongside patients through one of the most profound experiences of their lives. Whether you are a physician, nurse, social worker, patient navigator, researcher, or administrator, your role is essential in ensuring that every individual facing cancer receives not only the best possible treatment but also the compassionate support they need to navigate their journey.

The pages of this journal reflect the ever-expanding landscape of oncology care, and I want to bring another vital and new resource to your attention. ACCC's [Equitable Delivery of Oncology Supportive Care Services: Handbook for Cancer Care Centers](#) reminds us that cancer care is not just about treating the disease; it is about addressing the whole person. It includes integrating services such as patient navigation, financial advocacy, symptom management, survivorship care, and mental health support. Every effort we make to alleviate distress—whether through a conversation about treatment decisions, a connection to a needed resource, or simply bearing witness to a patient's story—has a profound impact.

This handbook also provides cancer care centers with a framework and practical resources for building capacity to provide these services equitably and sustainably. The handbook primarily uses supportive care to describe the full spectrum of physical and psychosocial support for people with cancer, including access to care and social supports, engagement in care planning across the continuum, and symptom and side effect prevention and reduction.

Finally, this handbook highlights the essential role of collaboration in cancer care. Our ability to provide high-quality, patient-centered care depends on our willingness to work across disciplines, to break down barriers to access, and to advocate for the resources our patients need. In my nearly 3 decades as an oncology social worker, I have witnessed firsthand the power of an integrated care team: how a financial advocate's intervention can relieve a burden, how a nurse navigator's guidance can change a patient's experience, and how emotional support delivered by a social worker can transform a family's coping. These are not small moments; they are the foundation of truly comprehensive cancer care.

Because patients place their trust in us, we need to advocate for the best possible outcomes in all aspects of care. This resource will help you consider quality improvement and tips for sustaining supportive care services where you deliver cancer care.

I want to end with a note to the care teams who show up every day with skill, empathy, and resilience: Thank you. Your work matters. Your compassion makes a difference. And your dedication is shaping the future of oncology care. 