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Commentary

Marketing and the Physician Outreach Team

By Erin McElwain, MHA, and Heidi Findlay



Erin McElwain, MHA, is senior manager of market development at UK HealthCare, University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center, and PAMN chair.

Heidi Findlay is executive director of marketing and communications at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and PAMN vice chair.

Commentary Overview

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for marketing and communications professionals at cancer centers.
- Innovative approaches, including live-streamed surgical procedures and virtual tumor boards, extend the reach of physicians beyond the clinic.
- Effective strategies implemented at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and UK Markey Cancer Center will be presented at the NACCCO-PAMN annual meeting in Kansas City, MO, later this month.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a ripple effect on the delivery of care at cancer centers – from fewer cancer screenings and less clinical trial participation to staffing shortages and workforce burnout. Knowledge sharing among health care professionals, whether at large conferences or through informal networking, also took a hit from COVID. The pandemic has presented unique challenges to marketers and physician outreach and business development teams who are tasked with sharing cancer center clinical and research innovations with the broader health care community.

A number of physician outreach efforts, including those described below, will be shared in “Marketing and the Physician Outreach Team,” a session at the **Public Affairs and Marketing Network (PAMN) meeting** in Kansas City, Missouri, April 25-28. **PAMN** is a cooperative venture of academically-based comprehensive, clinical, basic and consortium cancer centers, as designated by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) or that are members of AACI. PAMN works in close association with the NCI’s Office of Media Relations and Public Affairs.

Overcoming COVID Challenges Using Multichannel Communications

At Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, New York, busy referring physicians, oncologists, collaborative research partners, and others in the oncology industry are updated on the work happening in labs and clinics through various digital communication channels.

The **Physician Resources website**—a collaborative effort by the multispecialty physician relations and marketing communications team—houses more than 50 videos on many cancer specialties, with more added each month. Using digital platforms—social media, email, digital advertising, and e-newsletters—as well as in-person meetings and informal outreach, the Roswell Park team extends the reach of its physicians beyond the clinic. The center's website sees nearly 1,200 unique visitors, with an average of more than 150 video plays, each month. In addition, a six-week Physician Live Chat series attracted more than 150 viewers.

The introduction of live-streamed surgical procedures at Roswell Park was particularly well-received. The inaugural two-day event in 2019—Roswell Park's **Masterclass on Bladder Cancer**—featured live surgical procedures and drew 482 live views and 283 additional on-demand visitors and page views from across the country.

More recently, interventional radiologist **Nathaniel Ivanick, MD, FCCP**, performed a **live robotic navigational bronchoscopy** to an audience of nearly 100 health care professionals. Roswell Park also hosts live presentations, including its recent **Dissecting Cutaneous Oncology** series, as well as **digital continuing medical education courses**.

Embracing a Collaborative Approach to Physician Engagement

Similar to Roswell Park, UK Markey Cancer Center and UK HealthCare in Lexington, Kentucky, embraced a collaborative approach for physician engagement and communication prior to 2020. The marketing team for Markey reached beyond traditional roles to include individuals from clinical research, the community impact office, the physician liaison program, and employees of the **Markey Cancer Center Affiliate Network** and **Markey Cancer Center Research Network**. This cohort continued to expand on existing programs while also launching Epic CareLink organization-wide in June of 2021.

The pandemic afforded the opportunity to develop a virtual tour of the cancer center and utilize virtual platforms for resources such as e-newsletters, annual conferences, a Physician Masterclass web series, a new Clinical Research Roadshow for affiliate hospitals and ongoing external provider meetings, both virtually and in-person. This is all in addition to the existing **Molecular Tumor Board**, which virtually supports community partners without cost to the health system or patient; **Cancer Conversations** podcast series; training series for research professionals; monthly virtual oncology education for physicians, nurses, and pharmacists; and telecare and telegenetics for patients.

One of the big wins for UK Markey was onboarding the use of OncoLens to streamline tumor boards while also matching patients with available clinical trials. Several affiliate hospitals also found value in using the cloud-based platform to provide virtual tumor board meetings, which was essential during the height of the pandemic.

Over the last year, UK HealthCare's physician liaison program has been deeply involved with the launch of **Epic CareLink**, which provides referring partners with a window into their patients' care and the ability to refer directly into the system. Around 7,000 individuals and 980 unique groups are currently using the system, with more requests received daily. The Commonwealth of Kentucky is largely rural with a history of high cancer rates, and the digital landscape has created more pathways to care for patients in the state and beyond its borders.

Integrating Physician Outreach and Marketing

At the PAMN meeting later this month we will be joined by our colleagues **Ashley Snowden**, director of physician and corporate relations at Roswell Park, and **Jessica Coomes**, physician liaison, UK Markey, to share approaches and thoughts on the successful intersection of physician relations and marketing.

Held annually for cancer center marketing, public affairs, communications, and, most recently, physician relations professionals, the PAMN meeting is hosted jointly with the National Association of Cancer Center Development Officers (NACCDO). The meeting links cross-

functional roles in development and marketing to share information that advances the mission at PAMN's 45 member cancer centers.

Our Mission

The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) represents 103 premier academic and freestanding cancer centers in the United States and Canada. AACI is accelerating progress against cancer by empowering North America's leading cancer centers in their shared mission to alleviate suffering.

About AACI Commentary

To promote the work of its members, AACI publishes *Commentary*, a monthly editorial series focusing on major issues of common interest to North American cancer centers, authored by cancer center leaders and subject matter experts.



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