The History of NCCN and JNCCN

John A. Gentile Jr

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John A. (Jack) Gentile Jr has been the Chairman of Harborside Press since 2008 and the publisher of NCCN's journal, *JNCCN*, since Harborside took over its publishing responsibilities in 2009.

Mr. Gentile began his career in pharmacy during his service in the US Army, including running hospital pharmacies in the Panama Canal Zone and in San Juan, Puerto Rico. After his service, he joined E. R. Squibb and Sons as a pharmaceutical representative and began his career in medical publishing, learning from his mentor Jack Scher, president and CEO of International Medical News Service. In 1978, Mr. Gentile started his first company, PRR, Inc., as the marketing and advertising director for US Medicine, a medical newspaper for physicians and pharmacists in government service. In 1980, he collaborated with Biomedical Information Company to create and publish 17 specialty editions of *The Compendium of Drug Therapy*.

PRR's publishing division began to focus solely on cancer in 1990, when Mr. Gentile merged Dominus Publishing into PRR, becoming the publisher of *Primary Care & Cancer* and *ONCOLOGY*. PRR, Inc. became NCCN's Conference Secretariat for the first 5 years of the NCCN Annual Conference, and PRR's journal, *ONCOLOGY*, published the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines, volumes I through VI, before *JNCCN* was founded.

In addition to serving as publisher of *JNCCN*, Mr. Gentile is also a member of the NCCN Foundation Board of Directors, serving as an officer and board secretary. Harborside Press also publishes *The ASCO Post* and *JADPRO*, the *Journal of the Advanced Practitioner in Oncology*.

The ideas and viewpoints expressed in this editorial are those of the author and do not necessarily represent any policy, position, or program of NCCN.

I was honored by the invitation to offer my memories of the early days of NCCN. I am fortunate to have an insider/outsider view of those first annual meetings and the publication of the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines, which began in my former journal, *ONCOLOGY*, and, of course, continues in *JNCCN*—*Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network*.

My journey with NCCN began at a press conference in the late summer of 1995 at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC). The first Board of Directors had gathered in New York City to introduce this network of (then) 13 Member Institutions to a room filled with consumers and health care press.

Joe Simone, MD, Chair of the Board and Physician-in-Chief of MSKCC, and Catherine Harvey, DrPH, interim CEO of NCCN, presented the board and gave a brief description of the concept and mission of the organization. The response from members of the press seemed to be bemused interest. I remember that the overall reaction was that there was little chance these 13 cancer centers could work closely enough to deliver on their promised goals—namely, the development of clinical practice guidelines in oncology.

I, for one, was overwhelmed by the enormity of this endeavor and thrilled to see the enthusiasm expressed by the NCCN Board. I introduced myself to both Joe and Catherine and offered assistance through my company's portfolio of cancer-related publications: *ONCOLOGY*, *Primary Care & Cancer*, and *Oncology News International*. Our editorial director, Jim McCarthy, and I believed the clinical practice guidelines proposed by NCCN would be an incredible benefit to all cancer specialists, whether in community practices, major cancer centers, hospital settings, or academic institutions.

Later that year, NCCN made the wise decision that these new guidelines should be made available to everyone free of charge. My company at the time, PRR, Inc., presented an idea to Joe Simone, Catherine Harvey, and the newly named CEO of NCCN, Bruce Ross, about introducing the new guidelines at an NCCN-centered conference. PRR became the management company for the first and subsequent 5 annual NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines meetings. After the first conference, which had more than 400 people in attendance, we published version 1.0 of the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines) in *ONCOLOGY*. We continued to publish new full versions in special, biannual issues, along with monthly guideline updates.

Under the guidance of the next CEO, William (Bill) McGivney, PhD, and with the hard work of the incredible NCCN volunteers and staff, the annual NCCN Annual Conference grew substantially, both in stature and attendance. Publishing the latest versions of the guidelines increased their exposure to all cancer specialists in the United States and abroad, and *ONCOLOGY* also provided insight into how the guidelines were created, as well as methods used to integrate the guidelines into everyday practice. By the millennium, the NCCN Guidelines were viewed by more than 20,000 oncology specialists in the United States, through both the conference and their publication in *ONCOLOGY*. In addition, hundreds of thousands of those interested were able to access the NCCN Guidelines on NCCN's Web site, NCCN.org.

The NCCN Guidelines were also fast becoming the gold standard of cancer treatment. In 2002, Bill McGivney; Rodger Winn, MD, Chair of the NCCN Guidelines Steering Committee; and Joan McClure, Senior VP of Clinical Information, developed

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a plan to launch a peer-reviewed, clinical journal that would become the official journal of NCCN and would thereafter be the exclusive publication home of the NCCN Guidelines. The inaugural issue of *JNCCN* was published by Jones & Bartlett in January 2003, with Dr. Winn serving as its Editor-in-Chief.

The mission of this new and exciting journal was to publish not only the NCCN Guidelines, containing the latest information about best clinical practices, but also articles discussing the full range of oncology care, including outcomes, and new research initiatives. *JNCCN*'s quarterly frequency in 2003 grew to 12 issues annually by 2010, with an added special publication highlighting presentations from the NCCN Annual Conference. The National Library of Medicine chose *JNCCN* for indexing in MEDLINE in 2005, and Thomson Reuters followed suit by tracking *JNCCN* in its Journal Citation Report, assigning it an impact factor, in 2011. Furthermore, in 2007, CMS added *JNCCN* to the list of peer-reviewed journals used to determine medically accepted indications for drugs and biological agents used in anticancer treatment.

After the unfortunate death of Dr. Winn, Harold J. Burstein, MD, PhD, became *JNCCN*'s second editor-in-chief in July 2008, and under his leadership, *JNCCN* continued its rise in importance among oncologists. As the only journal offering the NCCN Guidelines as well as the NCCN Guidelines Insights, which discusses how the guidelines are developed and updated, *JNCCN*'s readership metrics moved into the Top 10 of all oncology publications.

In January 2009, Dr. McGivney and the Board of Directors honored my partners, Anthony Cutrone and Conor Lynch, and me by appointing our company, Harborside Press, as the new publishers of *JNCCN*. This was a reunion for me, bringing back the print publishing responsibilities of the NCCN Guidelines through *JNCCN*. Working with Dr. Burstein and *JNCCN*'s incredibly talented editorial staff, including Kimberly Callan, Kerrin Green, and Genevieve Emberger Hartzman, the journal continued to flourish, expanding its rankings as measured by Kantar Media, an independent media marketing and monitoring service.

JNCCN has also made a seamless transition to the digital world. In 2010, *JNCCN*.org moved its Web platform to the HighWire Press portal, based out of Stanford University. Three years later, we launched mobile applications for *JNCCN* for the tablet and phone. *JNCCN*'s e-mail newsletters are some of the most popular in the industry and are a great conduit to the digital content available at *JNCCN*.org.

In 2014, following Dr. Burstein's successful 5-year term, Margaret Tempero, MD, became *JNCCN*'s third editor-in-chief, appointed by NCCN's Board of Directors and current CEO, Robert Carlson, MD. Dr. Tempero, a world-renowned expert in pancreatic cancer and a past president of ASCO, quickly placed her stamp on the next stage of *JNCCN*'s growth by expanding the editorial direction of the journal to focus on original health services research. Early evidence of Dr. Tempero's initiatives comes from *JNCCN*'s rise to the fourth-highest read oncology journal among the 34 publications monitored by Kantar Media.

Throughout my history with NCCN, I have been amazed by the continuity of excellence this organization has experienced. This legacy is due to the extremely talented and dedicated leadership of the organization, the tireless volunteer panelists and chairs, and terrific staff. Working with NCCN and *JNCCN* has been a highlight of my professional career, and I am extremely proud of the small part I have played its development.