Joan S. McClure, MS

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Ms. McClure previously managed national oncology information programs for patients, health professionals, and the public on contracts with the NCI and supported the FDA in identifying and developing standards for medical and toxicology data used for submission to regulatory authorities in the United States, Europe, and Japan. She earned her MS degree from the University of Maryland, College Park.

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

NCCN: Touched by Cancer

Joan S. McClure, MS

As people who work at an organization whose mission is to improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of cancer care so that patients can live better lives, NCCN staff members are acutely aware of the burden cancer places on both patients and their caregivers. NCCN is an organization with fewer than 100 employees, most of them in their 20s, 30s, and 40s and seemingly healthy. Nevertheless, NCCN has been touched by cancer. As my contribution to NCCN's 20th Anniversary remembrances, I would like to remember in particular 3 members of the NCCN family who were instrumental in developing NCCN's mission and culture and whom we lost to cancer.

First, Rodger Winn, MD, was the “father” of the NCCN Guidelines program and founding Editor-in-Chief of *JNCCN*. Rodger was a medical oncologist who had the idea that cancer guidelines could be constructed as process maps that allowed a user to “follow the finger” across the clinical decision-making pathway from diagnosis through palliation. He had a wicked sense of humor and a steely determination that allowed him to insist that the differences among experts could be bridged. He insisted that panels first find areas where they agreed. Once a panel was in the habit of agreeing, he allowed them to move on to areas that were more controversial. He realized that both evidence and consensus among experts are important in making recommendations in a discipline in which high-quality data are often lacking.

Each year, NCCN gives the Rodger Winn Award to a panel member who embodies Rodger's enthusiasm, love of life, and dedication to the NCCN Guidelines program. You might ask what can make a top oncologist at the top of his or her game weep. I would answer: the Rodger Winn Award. He was a role model and trailblazer.

Second, I would like to remember Pat Daulerio. She was NCCN's first employee and one whose example molded the collaborative culture and cohesive staff of NCCN. As the leader of the NCCN meetings group, Pat took responsibility for ensuring that the details that make for a positive experience for attendees were as close to perfect as possible. She nurtured her staff, providing them with leadership and enthusiasm for a job well done. She made work fun.

In Pat's last days, she shared her experience with advanced non-small cell lung cancer with the Discovery Channel in a continuing education program developed with NCCN. She allowed a camera crew into her home and discussed with the filmmakers what was important to her as a patient with incurable cancer and to her family. The Pat Daulerio Award is given each year to a staff member who exemplifies Pat's loyalty, dedication, spirit, and creativity.

Another employee important to shaping NCCN culture, Debbie Hampton was a member of the NCCN Oncology Research Program. She was a live wire and extraordinarily generous. She worked hard to help start up what was then a new program area for NCCN, but she was always ready for a good laugh too. She also contributed to creating a collegial, friendly work environment in which contributions of staff at all levels are recognized as essential and in which the ability to figure out how to develop new programs is key. She was dedicated to her work and to the organization. Throughout her treatment for pancreatic cancer, she focused on staying connected to work and her second family at NCCN. Debbie was one of the first recipients of the Pat Daulerio Award.

Several years ago, a group of NCCN employees were charged with codifying NCCN's core values. In doing so, they looked at the characteristics that are most important to the organization. The contributions and characters of Rodger, Pat, and Debbie helped to shape these core values: excellence, collaboration, respect, integrity, passion, and innovation.