



ONCO News

The official newsletter of the Association of Physician Assistants in Oncology • Spring 2021

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Message from the President

By Colleen Tetzlaff, PA-C, APAO President



As we welcome Spring with warmer weather and longer sun-filled days, we also welcome the increasing supply of coronavirus vaccines and the glimpse of being able to return to some sort of normalcy in the near future. Our APAO Board looks forward to being able to gather in person again with our members, but until then, we remain committed to our mission: To promote the utilization of Physician Assistants in the delivery of exceptional care to people with cancer and related disorders.

Our multiple committees have been working diligently to bring our members new content, education, and resources. In late spring our Education Committee plans to debut a new podcast series, and, in collaboration with Horizon CME, the development of an Oncology 101 Series is in the works. Our Student Outreach Committee is proud to announce a new mentorship Program. Please see below and also stay tuned to your email for more details and to register to become a mentor/mentee.

APAO is launching a new Community Oncology Committee to help meet the needs and better integrate our community oncology colleagues into our organization by providing support, resources, and education to our community oncology members throughout the country.

Our Conference Planning Committee is also well underway to bringing us yet another outstanding Annual Oncology Symposium in September 2021. More details on this year's conference will be coming soon.

Nominations are also now open for APAO's Student Scholarship, Lifetime Achievement Award, and our new Academic Award. We encourage you to apply or nominate a colleague. Visit our website for full details and to complete the application/nomination forms.

To keep you abreast of all of APAO's "happenings" and pertinent information related to PAs and Oncology, our Social Media Committee

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APAO

ASSOCIATION OF
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS
IN ONCOLOGY
partners in cancer care

APAO Board of Directors

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Message from the President - continued from front page

has been very busy and committed to making sure our members are “in the know”. If you haven’t already, please follow APAOnc on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to stay up to date on our latest news and announcements.

While APAO is fortunate to have many member volunteers who continue to advance and improve our organization, we are always looking for more. Please consider joining one of our many active committees or in a leadership position within the organization as our Board of Director Elections will be coming in May. The benefits of volunteering are multiple, including newly formed friendships, networking with colleagues, and the rich reward of giving back to your profession, to name a few. I hope you will join us!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lifetime Achievement Award

Nominations open March 1 – April 30, 2021

The APAO Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes an exemplary PA serving in the field of oncology. The recipient is presented with the award at the annual APAO Oncology Symposium.

The recipient of the award will receive the following:

- **Lifetime Membership to APAO**
- **Complimentary registration to the APAO Oncology Symposium where the award will be presented**
- **Three night’s stay at the conference hotel**
- **Travel reimbursement of up to \$500.00 to attend the Symposium**

Colleagues are welcome to nominate a PA in Oncology who have met the following qualifications:

- **PA in Hematology/Oncology, Surgical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, or another related sub-specialty for at least 10 years**
- **Nominee must be a member of APAO**
- **Current Members of the APAO Board of Directors are not eligible for nomination**

In the event we are unable to hold an in-person conference this year due to Covid19, this year’s recipient will not receive the award in person.

Click [here](#) to nominate. Deadline: April 30, 2021

**Mark your calendar for the
24th Annual Symposium
September 23-26, 2021**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Student Scholarship

Nominations open March 1 – April 30, 2021

Scholarship Information

- A \$2,500 scholarship will be awarded
- In the event we are unable to hold an in-person conference this year due to COVID-19, this year's recipient will not receive the award in person

Eligibility Criteria

- AAPA member (or applicant)
- PA student in their last year enrolled in a ARC-PA-accredited program
- Clinical phase (completed basic science courses or near completion)
- Applicant has not previously received a PA foundation or other specialty organization scholarship
- Applicant has a strong interest in pursuing a career in the oncology field
- A clinical rotation in an oncology specialty is strongly encouraged but not required
- Applicant must be graduating from their program between May 1, 2021 and August 31, 2021
- Applicant must have a minimum GPA of 3.0. If your program does not provide a numerical GPA (i.e. PASS/FAIL), the program director/designee must provide an explanation of the grading system

For more information and to apply click [here](#). Deadline: April 30, 2021

Investigator Award

The APAO Investigator Award is open to PAs in oncology who are lead authors on abstracts selected for presentation at a scientific meeting.

Recipients of the APAO Investigator Award will receive between \$1,000 to \$1,500 in monetary support, to cover costs associated with attending and presenting the abstract at the scientific meeting.

Special APAO Investigator awards may be awarded for select high quality abstracts. In addition to the award stipend, awardees will also receive complimentary registration to the annual APAO conference, an invitation to present the abstract in an oral presentation during the conference and recognition at the annual meeting with presentation of a commemorative plaque.

Research Award

The APAO Research Award is open to PAs in oncology who are interested in exploring novel research initiatives dedicated to contributing to, or developing, an improved understanding of the Physician Assistant profession or cancer and related disorders.

Recipients of the APAO Research Award will receive monetary support to fund research and the ability to contact potential research participants to field surveys.

In addition to the award stipend, awardees will also receive complimentary registration to APAO's annual Oncology Symposium and an invitation to present their research findings during the Symposium.

APAO Academic Award

The APAO Academic Award is open to PAs in oncology who are pursuing advanced degrees/certifications and are enrolled in an academic program. Recipients of the APAO Academic Award will receive a one-time monetary award to apply toward the cost of academic tuition and offset educational expenses.

Scholarship Information

- Up to \$2,500 scholarship will be awarded

Eligibility Criteria

- Graduate of an accredited PA Program
- Work in an oncology setting as a PA
- Member in good standing of APAO
- Member in good standing of AAPA
- Enrolled in advanced degree program and in good academic standing
- The award cannot be given to the same individual more than once

Award Recipient Requirements:

- The recipient must complete his or her degree/certification within three years of the award.
- APAO should be notified of any address changes.

Process:

Interested PAs should submit a completed application form to APAO to be considered for the award.

Application Deadline: April 30, 2021. Visit our website to complete the application form.

Introducing APAO's Mentorship Program!



People learn the most through shared knowledge and experience. APAO's Mentorship program has been designed to engage students and PA's in their first year of oncology careers to develop skills and guidance from an experienced APAO Mentor. Through this relationship, the program aims to set a foundation that allows growth and life-long learning in the mentee's academic and professional career.

Planned Program start date: May 2021 with the expectation of Mentor/Mentee communication in May 2021, August 2021, November 2021, February 2022 and to conclude May 2022.

**Please help us kick off this program
by becoming a Mentor!**

For more details about the Mentorship Program and to Become a Mentor click [here](#).

Board of Directors nominations coming in April

OPEN POSITIONS:

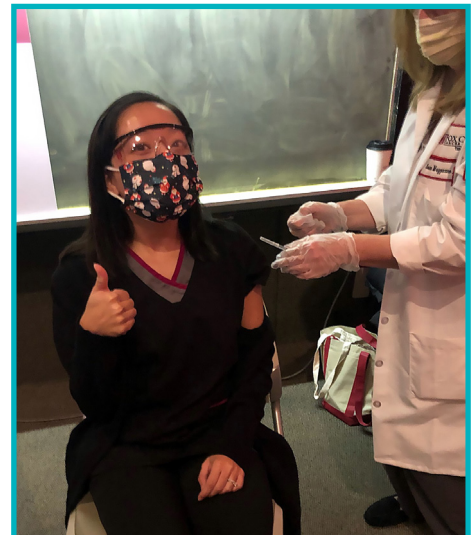
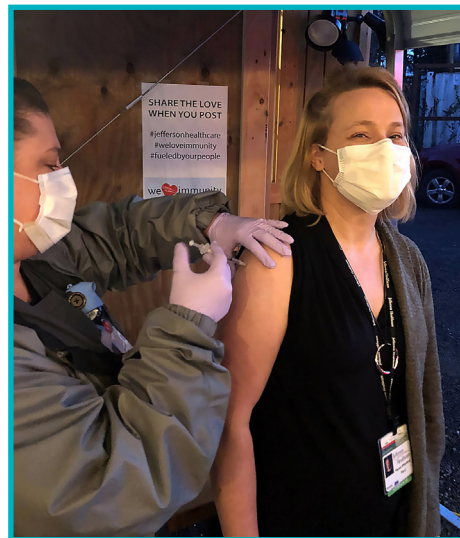
Executive Board of Directors (Voted by Membership)

- President-Elect (serves one year beginning July 1, 2021)
- Secretary (serves two year beginning July 1, 2021)
- Director At-Large (serves two years beginning July 1, 2021)

APAO Delegates (Voted by Membership)

- HOD Delegate (serves two years beginning July 1, 2021)

COVID Selfies from Our Board of Directors



Vaccines Are Here!

What Does That Mean For Our Oncology Patients?

There are now three vaccines approved through Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA for COVID-19. Available products include Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson and Johnson. The studies that led to these approvals did not include immunocompromised patients, but these patients are still eligible to receive the vaccine as long as they have no contraindications. However, clinicians should keep in mind that efficacy in this patient population is unknown and that there is potential for reduced immune responses. In particular, patients that may have attenuated or absent responses to the COVID vaccine include:

- Primary and secondary immunodeficiencies involving adaptive immunity
- Splenectomy or functional asplenia
- B cell directed therapies (monoclonal antibodies against CD20 or CD22, blinatumomab, CD19 or CD22-directed CAR T-cell therapies, and BTK inhibitors)
- T-cell directed therapies
- Chemotherapy regimens
- High dose corticosteroids (>2mg/kg/day daily prednisone or equivalent)
- Hematopoietic cell transplantation (HCT), in particular within 3-6 months for autologous HCT or allogenic HCT
- Underlying aberrant immunity (graft-versus-host disease [GVHD], graft rejection, neutropenia [ANC <500], lymphopenia [ALC <200])

Keeping this in mind, it is recommended to wait to vaccinate patients until there is evidence of B cell

recovery (ALC at least 1.0 or B cell count at least 50). General guidelines for vaccination timeline in oncology patients are:

- 3-6 months post-completion of B-cell directed or lymphodepleting therapies
- 3 months post-transplant (reasonable to defer if patient has received ATG or alemtuzumab, or has severe/uncontrolled GVHD)
- At least 3 months post-CAR T-cell therapy
- Defer vaccine until after nadir period for cytotoxic therapy
- Can give vaccine at any time during immunotherapy treatment

Other pearls:

- The above are guidelines and vaccine decisions should be made on a case by case basis. For patients on indefinite therapy, vaccination at earliest opportunity is recommended.
- Recommended to start any B-cell depleting therapy for at least 2-4 weeks after completion of vaccination
- There is no maximum interval between doses of vaccines. If the second dose of a vaccine is delayed past 21 or 28 days respectively, there is no need to restart the series
- COVID vaccines should be given a minimum of 14 days before or after administration with any other vaccine (note COVID vaccination should take priority over other vaccinations)
- Previous infection with SARS-CoV-2 should not impact vaccination decisions



Member Feature

Hope Stoddart

Hope Stoddart is a Physician Assistant who works at the McGlinn Cancer Institute in Reading, Pennsylvania. She works primarily with breast cancer patients and is in charge of the Survivorship Programs across all disciplines. She has been working as a PA-C since 2012 and in Oncology since July 2018.

Q: What drew you to the field of Oncology?

A: I always like teaching patients about their disease process. There is also so much to learn in Oncology with multiple aspects of care and so much room to grow. I found the field extremely interesting especially how cells change and become malignant, how different cancers behave, and I also enjoy treating patients with cancer and helping them through a difficult time.

Q: What is the most rewarding part of your job?

A: One of my favorite aspects of the job is being able to explain to a patient the results of a test or procedure whether it is in the exam room or over the phone. It is so important that patients feel in the loop about their care and also part of the decision making.

Q: Any tips for communicating complicated concepts to patients?

A: I've always felt drawing diagrams is extremely helpful. I also use calendars for difficult treatment regimens. Repetition, even if you've told them many times before, is essential. Also, knowing how to read facial expressions and non-verbal cues so that you know if they are really understanding is important. Make sure you have multiple ways to explain a disease process.

Q: What do you do for fun on the weekend?

A: I like to be active and enjoy CrossFit, Boot Camp Classes, etc. I go rock climbing and for hikes with my 6-year-old son and my husband. We also play lots of board games like Monopoly, Sorry, and Uno.

Membership Update

APAO would like to THANK YOU for your support and membership in our organization. Without you, it would be difficult to make such an impact on our profession year after year. APAO currently has 1,300+ members. Without your support, APAO would be unable to effectively provide all the services we currently offer to our members.

If you are not a member of APAO, membership is just \$40 annually, \$100.00 for 3 years, or \$400.00 for a Lifetime membership. [Click here to join.](#)”



Student Feature

Muhammad Khalique

Q: How did you decide you wanted to pursue a PA career in oncology?

A: My interest in oncology developed during my interaction with cancer patients at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. After my undergraduate education, I participated in research work which was focused on the inflammatory role of microbiota in bladder carcinoma at Ackerman Lab at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. My interactions with cancer patients and research work in oncology solidified my interest further in pursuing oncology specialty as a PA.

Q: What have your oncology rotations been like? (If they have been possible during Covid)

A: I have not completed an oncology rotation at this moment. However, I am preparing myself for oncology while staying connected with the clinical team at my school, the CUNY School of Medicine PA Program, and receiving guidance from APAO resources and mentorship.

Q: What field of oncology are you interested in pursuing when you graduate from PA school?

A: After completing my PA training, I look forward to joining medical oncology. I chose medical oncology because it will allow me the opportunity to maximize my patients' quality and quantity of life by incorporating my medical, clinical, and research experiences as well as educating the patients' families in providing excellent care in a triangular team-based effort.

Q: What have you enjoyed about volunteering for APAO?

A: APAO is a dynamic platform for students who want to join oncology as their future profession. While volunteering for APAO, I have received an opportunity to hone my critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. I have also enjoyed the direct interactions with the highly skilled PAs in oncology and learned from their expertise. APAO has provided direct mentorship and guidance to become better prepared for the oncology profession. In addition, through APAO, I have received an opportunity to attend the Leadership and Advocacy Summit and benefited from several online resources in oncology.

Connect with APAO

