

“But when a third of the [US News & World Report] ranking is based merely on reputation ... that’s where it gets a bit goofy.”

A Tough Choice

By Brad Fixler
Marketing Manager, University of Colorado Hospital

As a marketing professional and new contributor to this newsletter, I gave considerable thought as to what the subject of my first entry around healthcare marketing should be: branding (which we’ve all read about so much that I’m beginning to think nearly every literate soul should by now be pretty much an expert on the matter, but which I’ll probably still write about in the future); social media (currently at the apex of interest, much in the same way “branding” was around five years ago); advertising (is there a legitimate place for it in the world of healthcare?); physician outreach; and the list goes on.

But, as fortuitous timing would have it, just about the time I’d decided on a subject, the hospital rankings from *US News & World Report* were published. And I couldn’t resist a brief tome on the matter.

Now, I must preface that not all who read this are affected by the *US News* rankings, but on some level, they do affect us all in that “The List” is likely the most widely acknowledged and read ranking of its kind amongst consumers in this country. So in that regard, it does touch us all to a degree because that’s what many of our audiences and prospects are reading. Whether that’s a good or bad thing I’ll leave up to you.

The Concept of Rankings

We are a nation of competition. Our economy is based on it, our national fascination with athletics are all about it (go Broncos), and even within the somewhat muddled economy of healthcare we can find examples of entire businesses created from it as a result. Just ask the shareholders of HealthGrades. It’s in our nation’s psyche to desire to know who is the best, who is in the top ten, etc. I’m not bashing this behavior. In fact, I like that about us. But when it comes to something as broad and as important as healthcare and hospitals, I’m left wondering if our collective call for a list that tells us what we as consumers should do, at least in the manner that *US News* begets it, is a good thing. To be sure, particular statistics such as mortality rates, patient safety, volume, and the like can be quite instructional for consumers, and to be fair, the *US News* rankings take each of these factors into account as part of its methodology. But when a third of the ranking is based merely on reputation (the *US News* methodology), well, that’s where it gets a bit goofy. In fact, a recent and oft-alluded study by Ashwini R. Sehgal, MD, states:

“The relative standings of the top 50 hospitals largely
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ACE Calendar

**ACE 17TH
ANNUAL MEETING**
JAN. 26–29, 2011
NEW ORLEANS, LA
THE ROOSEVELT HOTEL - THE
WALDORF ASTORIA COLLECTION

18th Annual Meeting
JAN. 18–21, 2012
SAVANNAH, GA
HYATT REGENCY SAVANNAH

19th Annual Meeting
JAN. 23–26, 2013
SAN ANTONIO, TX
GRAND HYATT SAN ANTONIO

President’s Message

Joy Soleiman, MPA
Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson



I hope everyone is enjoying the summer and has had some opportunity to vacation and have fun. My family is going straight into the Orlando heat to watch our four grandchildren enjoy to wonders of Disney for the first time. It will be a pleasant break from the hectic work of the cancer center.

Part of all our concern and what’s keeping us up at night is the uncertainty of the future with Healthcare Reform and what it will mean for our cancer center. ACE has recently sent you a survey on The Impact of Healthcare Reform. **Please take the time to complete it.** One of the members of our Board of Directors, Linda Ferris is putting together a paper for *The Cancer Journal* on the impact of healthcare reform on cancer executives and the hospital industry from an institutional provider point of view. Your input into this survey is

most valuable to hear how ACE executives are preparing for the reforms.

In this issue, the ACE Committees have shared some of the projects and activities on which they are working. All of the work of ACE is done by volunteers and we greatly appreciate the commitment of all our committee members. The Membership Committee asked me to remind you to spread the word about ACE to your colleagues and encourage them to join so they get the benefit of a full year and enjoy all our membership benefits. We have renewed the **Member-get-a-Member** campaign. Tell all your friends and colleagues to join ACE and get a gift card reward. **We also ask you to renew your own dues today.**

If you have ever pondered over your cancer center’s ranking in *US News and World Report* and had endless meetings on what is needed to be done to increase your scores, you will enjoy the article written by Brad Fixler.

Remember, if you have other ideas you would like to challenge us with, please feel free to contact us. **ACE is made better by the contributions of its members!** ■

US News Hospital Rankings

> Continued from page 1

reflect the subjective reputations of those hospitals. Moreover, little relationship exists between subjective reputation and objective measures of hospital quality among the top 50 hospitals.”

And further:

“The predominant role of reputation is caused by an extremely high variation in reputation score compared with objective quality measures among the 50 top-ranked hospitals in each specialty. As a result, reputation score contributes disproportionately to variation in total *US News* score and therefore to the relative standings of the top 50 hospitals.”

In this case, the marketing guy actually agrees with the researcher. Amazing.

The published and public methodology for these rankings notes that the reputational scores of hospitals are based on a random and unaided survey among AMA physicians to list their top picks among a given specialty, including, of course, cancer care. So it only stands to reason the larger and better funded marketing departments of hospitals will and do try to influence these perceptions. In fact, I heard from a very good source just last week that one particular medical center has allotted up to \$3 million for a marketing campaign specifically designed to influence said voters (and, no, it isn't the institution I work for). As a marketer, I applaud the effort. Even envy it a bit. But as a consumer, this entire thing about reputation doesn't hold water to me. It just doesn't feel right.

A New Line of Revenue for US News

This year, for the first time, we hospitals have been instructed by a licensing agent of *US News* that we now must pay for the use of the *US News* logo in promotional materials to market our rankings. From a business perspective, I can't argue with that. The logo is their intellectual property, and they have every right to charge for its use. But along with a hefty price tag for use of the “badge” as they call it, the publication decided this year to no longer use a general “Top Hospital” badge and instead create separate specialty-specific badges whose usage prices, of course, are determined by the number of badges you wish to use and how you wish to use them (web, print collateral, advertising, etc.). While I certainly can't blame what once was a venerable weekly news magazine and that now seems primarily to be a rankings agency to attempt to monetize the popular thing it's got going, I can't help but feel a bit put off by the notion that it is financially capitalizing on the very thing it's evaluating. And, no, I am not accusing *US News* of a pay-to-play scenario. But, again, it's just another of those things that just doesn't feel right.

The Scramble

So here we are, healthcare institutions trying to figure out the validity of such a ranking while simultaneously deciding, at least for those who are ranked, if we should sell our souls, pay for the usage rights, and begin putting the acclaim in our marketing messages. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of consumers are out there with list in-hand, deciding where to go to have a given procedure. And as marketers, we are left with the dilemma of swimming with the trend or standing on principle.

I'm calling *Consumer Reports*. ■

LEHIGH VALLEY HEALTH NETWORK

There is a great deal of excitement around cancer care at Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN), and we are looking for a new leader to help drive our continued success. If you are an experienced and passionate cancer executive with proven skills in strategic planning, program development, marketing, operations management, staff development, medical staff relationships and financial oversight and you enjoy being part of a high-performing, progressive and financially stable organization, then you may be our new **Vice President for Cancer Services**.

LVHN was recently chosen to be one of only 30 cancer centers in the country to join the National Cancer Institute Community Cancer Center Program (NCCCP) which will bring new cancer treatment clinical trials to the Lehigh Valley. Due to our new academic affiliation with the University of South Florida, we are now working with the Moffitt Cancer Center to bring phase 2 trials to LVHN. Our program volumes continue to grow, registering 2,700 new analytic cases each year. We are accredited as Network Cancer Program by the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer, received an Outstanding Program Achievement Award, and are accredited as an NAPBC comprehensive site.

A beautiful suburban area with a cosmopolitan flair, this eastern Pennsylvania location has a population of over 700,000. It offers excellent public schools, 10 colleges and universities, safe and affordable neighborhoods, and a plethora of recreational and cultural offerings. Enjoy easy access to Philadelphia, New York City and the shores of New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware

Email a cover letter and resume to Keith Weinhold, Sr VP, Operations, c/o tammy.jamison@LVH.com or call (610) 969-0211.


A PASSION FOR BETTER MEDICINE.™



LVHN.org

2010–2011 Corporate Sponsors

ACE is very pleased to announce our new Corporate Sponsors:

PLATIMUN	 ELEKTA
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BRONZE	Nursenav Oncology

ACE Needs You! Learn more about how to become a corporate sponsor at www.cancerexecutives.org



ASSOCIATION
of CANCER
EXECUTIVES

ACE Member {Get-A-Member} Campaign Under Way!

Refer a **NEW** ACE Member to attend the ACE Annual Meeting and get a reward!

- Referral deadline is **OCTOBER 31, 2010**
- Successful referrals will receive a \$25 AmEx gift card*
- Rules for receiving gift card:
 - Name must appear on new member online application
 - Dues must be current; referral must be registered and in attendance at ACE's 17th Annual Meeting in New Orleans
 - Claim your gift card at the Annual Business Meeting during the ACE 17th Annual Meeting in New Orleans



ACE Welcome New Members

Since July 1, 2010

Member-Get-A-Member:
Refer a **NEW** ACE Member to attend the ACE Annual Meeting and get a reward!

(See details on previous page)

■ **Diane Becquart**, *Director, Cancer Center*
Harrington Hospital
55 Sayles Street
Southbridge, MA 01550
T: 508-765-6443 | F: 508-765-3094
E: dbecquar@harringtonhospital.org
Referred by current ACE Member, Matt Sherer

■ **Karen Donahue**, *CPA, VP Operations/Finance*
Norton Healthcare/Norton Cancer Institute
315 East Broadway
Louisville, KY 47130
T: 502-629-7434 | F: 502-629-2443
E: karen.donahue@nortonhealthcare.org
Referred by current ACE Member, Tammy McClanahan

■ **Christopher Loertscher**
UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
1515 Holcombe Boulevard - Unit 432
Houston, TX 77030
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Referred by current ACE Member, Wendy Austin

■ **Lewis L Perkins**, *MSN, RN, VP Patient Care Services/CNO*
Norton Healthcare/Norton Cancer Institute
315 East Broadway
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E: lewis.perkins@nortonhealthcare.org
Referred by current ACE Member, Tammy McClanahan

ACE Committee Updates

Education Committee

Bill Laffey, *Chair*

The Committee has been meeting every two weeks since April. The agendas for both **Oncology 101** and the **ACE 17th Annual Meeting** are close to final, with speakers now being identified and confirmed. We are doing our best to bring you the latest concepts and best speakers we can possibly find. You will hear national experts discuss the impact of Health Care Reform on your oncology program; learn about multi-disciplinary clinics, patient navigation and survivorship programs; find out how recognized leaders are preparing for the new 2011 Commission on Cancer Standards. Continue your development as leaders of some of the best cancer programs in the country by registering for one or both events, to be held **January 26-29, 2011**, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Membership Committee

Dianne Cassels, *Chair*

The Committee has had a monthly teleconference with discussions on how to recruit and retain members. Some of the actions this year include:

1. Revision of the ACE Membership Brochure
2. Development of a postcard that encourages both membership and attendance at the annual meeting
3. Focus on states without any members; special contact letters to these facilities
4. Letter to attendees of Oncology 101 Course to encourage membership
5. Member-Get-a-Member campaign

In addition, we have had great success in renewals for this year:

- 156 members renewed as of today (Total goal is 288)
- 94 members renewed as of 7/29/09 (Last year)
- Weekly reminders are being sent out
- 4 new members from Member-Get-a-Member (Goes till 10/31)

Vendor Relations Committee

David Gosky, *Co-Chair*

Teri Guidi, *Co-Chair*

The Committee held its first conference call on 7/13. The prospectus was reviewed and the following changes were recommended:

- Reduction of some prices with the hopes of attracting more sponsors to higher levels and making the levels more consistent.
- Addition of a few benefits to the Platinum and Gold Corporate Sponsorships (banner, preferred selection of exhibit location, mention on slides prior to educational sessions).

The Committee had a second call on 7/19. The revised prospectus was reviewed and Committee members were assigned to contact specific vendors. The next call is scheduled for 8/9 to review progress. ■

ACE RENEW YOUR 2010-2011 ACE MEMBERSHIP DUES ONLINE! www.cancerexecutives.org

Did you miss the **2010 or 2009 ACE Annual Meeting?**
Catch up with the Meeting Notebooks!



Share Your News

Announce your organization's achievements, program changes, staff transitions and events in *ACE Update* for all ACE members to see! Send us your news and press releases at: info@cancerexecutives.org

YOUR INPUT IS IMPORTANT TO US!

ACE appreciates member feedback and suggestions to better serve you. E-mail us with your questions or comments at: info@cancerexecutives.org

JOIN A COMMITTEE

For information on ACE Standing Committees visit www.cancerexecutives.org or email info@cancerexecutives.org



Want to know more about the **Cancer Center Building Blocks Conference?**
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17TH

Annual Meeting
JANUARY 26-29, 2011
NEW ORLEANS

THE ROOSEVELT HOTEL
THE WALDORF ASTORIA COLLECTION



ACE has moved!!

Please send all correspondence to **OUR NEW ADDRESS >>>**

NOTE: phone, fax and email remain the same.



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