



# ONCO News

The official newsletter of the Association of Physician Assistants in Oncology • Fall 2020

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## Message from the President

By Colleen Tetzlaff, PA-C, APAO President



Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of the APAO newsletter. I would first like to take the opportunity to thank you, our membership, for providing me the opportunity to serve you as President of APAO for 2021. Throughout the years, APAO has benefited from strong, dedicated leaders who have helped move our organization forward, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to continue that precedent alongside the rest of our amazing Board of Directors and numerous committee volunteers.

As we all know, 2020 has proven to be a year like no other we've known. We have all faced personal and professional challenges throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, what is not a surprise is the resilience and perseverance that each of us, as oncology PAs, has maintained as we continue to provide exceptional patient care to our vulnerable patients. It is also a testament that despite these challenging times, and perhaps limited individual free time, so many members remain committed to APAO and have answered the call to serve. Together we continue to pursue multiple initiatives and make advances to our profession in oncology.

Under the leadership of our Immediate Past President, Cory Williams, over the last year APAO:

- Finalized a partnership with Horizon CME to provide education to our membership through the Horizon CME APP Oncology Summit series and its associated online library. Our collaboration with Horizon CME continues to develop and we are excited about the future development of an APP Oncology 101 Course.
- Finalized a collaborative agreement with the PAs in Hospice and Palliative Medicine (PAHPM) organization to provide a complimentary one-year dual membership to members of both organizations where each organizations' members gain enhanced access to

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# APAO

ASSOCIATION OF  
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS  
IN ONCOLOGY  
partners in cancer care

# APAO Board of Directors

## **PRESIDENT**

Colleen Tetzlaff, PA-C  
[Colleen.Tetzlaff@fcc.edu](mailto:Colleen.Tetzlaff@fcc.edu)

## **PRESIDENT-ELECT**

Bruce Christensen, PA-C  
[ChristensenB@uthscsa.edu](mailto:ChristensenB@uthscsa.edu)

## **SECRETARY**

Christina DiBenedetto, PA-C  
[christina.valvano@gmail.com](mailto:christina.valvano@gmail.com)

## **TREASURER**

Theresa Wittenberg, MA, PA-C  
[theresa.wittenberg@gmail.com](mailto:theresa.wittenberg@gmail.com)

## **PAST PRESIDENT**

Cory Williams, PA-C  
[corinnebazany@yahoo.com](mailto:corinnebazany@yahoo.com)

## **DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE**

Sarah Vitulli, PA-C  
[sarvitulli@gmail.com](mailto:sarvitulli@gmail.com)

Keara Barnaby, PA-C  
[kearabarnaby@yahoo.com](mailto:kearabarnaby@yahoo.com)

## **AAPA HOUSE OF DELEGATES AND AAPA/APAO LIAISON TO ASCO**

Heather M. Hylton, PA-C  
[hmylton@prodigy.net](mailto:hmylton@prodigy.net)

## **AAPA HOUSE OF DELEGATES ALTERNATE**

Jennifer Reinhart, PA-C  
[pa.jennifer.reinhart@gmail.com](mailto:pa.jennifer.reinhart@gmail.com)

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Ryan Clayton  
[rclayton@kmgnet.com](mailto:rclayton@kmgnet.com)

APAO Headquarters  
222 S. Westmonte Dr., Ste. 111  
Altamonte Springs, FL 32714  
407-774-7880  
Fax: 407-774-6440  
[www.apao.cc](http://www.apao.cc)

## *Message from the President - continued from front page*

both hematology/oncology and palliative care resources, advocacy efforts, and CME and educational opportunities.

- Funded research in the Burnout of Oncology PAs, the results of which has brought national attention to this healthcare crisis through publications in the *Journal of Oncology Practice* and findings presented at national conferences. Through the support of this field of research, APAO is uniquely positioned to lead efforts to reduce the risk of burnout. APAO is proud to have two of our members leading the AAPA task force on PA burnout.
- Held our 23rd Annual (and first Virtual!) Oncology Symposium in August. We are very grateful to our Conference Chairs, Jeremy Heinerich and Dwight Macero, and the entire Conference Planning Committee for pivoting to a virtual format so quickly and providing us with an outstanding and very successful virtual CME conference.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank everyone who participated in our membership survey which took place August 25 – September 15, 2020. We have utilized your feedback to prioritize APAO's initiatives for the upcoming year. Some of these initiatives include:

- The establishment of an Advocacy Committee to advance the oncology PA profession through initiatives that highlight the vital role of oncology PAs in team-based care and ensure that oncology PAs are working to the top of their degree and training. The committee's first project is assessing the differences in APP prescriptive privileges for chemotherapy among institutions and geographic regions. Ultimately, we hope to establish a Best Practice for chemotherapy prescribing privilege among APPs in oncology.
- The establishment of an Education Committee dedicated to the development of new and varying educational content and CME activities produced for APAO members beyond the annual symposium.
- A revitalized Student Outreach Committee dedicated to developing resources and networking opportunities for PA Students interested in the field of Oncology.
- An increased social media presence in order to provide members with the most current and up to date information, increase APAO visibility, and engage APAO membership and stakeholders through different platforms.
- The creation of an Oncology PA Academic Scholarship. This scholarship will be awarded to an oncology PA currently in practice pursuing additional studies. Stay tuned for upcoming announcements and further details.

Thank you again to all of our Board of Directors and numerous volunteers who enable APAO to move forward and remain the forefront organization representing PAs specializing in Oncology. We gladly welcome new members and new volunteers throughout the year and encourage you to become an active member of APAO. Please email me at [colleen.tetzlaff@fcc.edu](mailto:colleen.tetzlaff@fcc.edu) if you are interested in joining one of our committees or if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas for APAO.

As 2020 comes to a close, I hope everyone remains healthy and is able to enjoy the holiday season in its unique way this year.

The APAO logo is located in the top left corner of the banner. It consists of the letters 'APAO' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'A' and 'P' are in a dark red color, while the 'A', 'O', and 'O' are in a lighter red color. The background of the banner features a collage of images: a person in a white lab coat, a city skyline at sunset, and several circular icons representing various medical and professional themes.

# APAO 23RD ANNUAL ONCOLOGY SYMPOSIUM: A Virtual Experience

August 27-29, 2020

## 23rd Annual Virtual Symposium - A Great Success! And continuing opportunities...

As anyone who has attended or been involved with planning a conference knows, it is a lot of work under normal circumstances. When the coronavirus pandemic started to surge, we knew we were not going to be able to hold a live conference event in Denver as planned. The Board asked whether we could pull together a virtual conference experience. The conference committee and I, along with our association management staff, were able to adapt quickly to these trying times and develop a virtual symposium. We were uncertain whether we would have 10 people participate in a virtual conference, or hundreds like the live event. We knew that we would have to keep the conference affordable, have an easy platform to navigate, keep attendees engaged, and make it easy for those to participate on their own time given the increased demands of work and home life. I, along with everyone else, would have much preferred to have a live meeting in Denver and get to see all the old and new faces, but APAO's first virtual conference was an overwhelming success.

I am pleased to report that we had hundreds of people

participate in the live portion of the symposium. And there are still people signing up for the conference to date. There were three days of live continuing education opportunities from August 27-29 with question and answer sections including Best of ASCO topics, hematology/oncology, and a LIVE Leadership panel from PA leaders throughout the country discussing COVID-19's effects on healthcare. There are also prerecorded tracts with palliative/supportive care, radiation oncology, and professional development.

Please spread the word to your colleagues that they can still register for the virtual symposium at <https://www.apao.cc/23rd-annual-oncology-symposium>. All sessions are recorded and available for viewing until August 27, 2021, and registration is only \$75 for up to 27.75 hours category 1 CME. Registration also includes one year of free APAO membership. We are currently planning the 24th Annual Symposium to take place hopefully in person in Nashville September 23- 26, 2021.

If you are looking for additional educational opportunities,

please also check out <https://apponcologysummit.mededmanager.com/store/live/search> with our partner Horizon CME. They have an educational sessions coming up on November 20 and 21. Use code APPOS30 for \$30 off to pay just \$10 with lots of opportunity to learn and interact with industry sponsors to win prizes. Also, visit <http://lymphomaandmyeloma.oncnet.com/> for the Imedex Leukemia, Lymphoma, Myeloma conference with added Benign Heme and NP/PA Tract. All of it is available on demand at an affordable price.

We know you have choices in your continuing education, and we welcome feedback about future conferences. Please reach out to me at [jeremyheinerichapao@gmail.com](mailto:jeremyheinerichapao@gmail.com) if you have questions/concerns. I look forward to seeing all of you in person as soon as it is safe.

*Jeremy Heinerich, PA-C DFAAPA  
PA Clinical Director  
Mount Sinai Hospital  
Past President APAO/Industry/  
Educational Liaison to the Board  
Co-Chair APAO Conference 2020*



# Congratulations to Emily Yang, Jessie Ehrisman, and My Kim Tran APAO 2020 Student Scholarship Winners!



## Emily Yang

Emily's interest in oncology blossomed during her time working as a medical assistant and administrative assistant at Global Oncology, Inc. in Alhambra, CA. During her three years there, she spent many hours developing relationships with cancer patients and becoming uniquely invested in their stories, as well as becoming well versed in different cancer therapies and witnessing the challenges of their side effects first hand. She then went on to acquire additional patient care experience as an ER scribe and ophthalmic technician before entering PA school at Stanford University in Fall 2018. At Stanford, she has enjoyed organizing

physician and physician assistant panels and dinner discussions surrounding topics in oncology care for the medical school as a part of the Oncology Interest Group leadership. She is also in the process of completing her Capstone Project, which surveys the social needs of 508 cancer patients to determine gaps in healthcare literacy, housing, transportation, and financial needs in community clinics.

From these experiences, Emily appreciates oncology as a uniquely impactful field in which providers are privileged to care for patients during some of the most vulnerable times in their lives. She hopes that as a future PA, she can be a means of empowerment for patients living with chronic illnesses to pursue life goals and to align their medical therapy with their personal values. Some of her favorite books which have inspired her desire to work in oncology and patient care are *When Breath Becomes Air*, *Salt in My Soul* and *The Emperor of All Maladies*.

## Jessica Ehrisman

Jessie was raised in Miami, Florida. Jessie moved to central North Carolina for all of her higher education and research. She found her niche when her interest in women's health led to work as a clinical research coordinator at Duke's division of Gynecologic Oncology; it was a marriage of everything that still fascinates Jessie. Her patients and some fabulous mentors inspired her to go to PA school, where her commitment to research hasn't cooled at all. While still in her didactic year at Elon University, Jessie began designing her own pilot study related to self-interpretation of direct-to-consumer genetic health reports. Jessie will be presenting a poster of preliminary results at the 2020 American Society of Human Genetics conference. Jessie hopes that through her PA career she might positively affect patients with cancer as much as they've positively affected her.



## My Kim Tran

Upon graduation from Boston University with a bachelor degree in Biomedical Laboratory and Clinical Science, My Kim joined Dr. Junjie Chen's lab as a research assistant in the Experimental Radiation Oncology department at MD Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC). She had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of research scientists and co-authored several papers about DNA repair pathways and proteomics studies. They collaborated closely with other labs including the ones led by physician scientists, which inspired My Kim to expand her knowledge from bench-side to bed-side with direct impact on patients. After

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shadowing various providers of different specialties at MDACC, she found herself at the doorstep of the physician assistant profession and now My Kim is part of the graduating class of NSU Orlando PA program this August.

Service-related activities have really become a central part throughout her childhood through PA school and something that definitely influenced her medicine practice. The cornerstones of My Kim's career goals are patient care, research, education, and prevention. Her goal is not only to provide exceptional medical care, but also to establish long-term connections and trust in all her patients. Through My Kim's rotations, she has the opportunity to work with amazing and very experienced PAs whom attending physicians speak highly of both personally and professionally. Developing into an astute PA herself and making a positive impact on patients is something My Kim is very excited to embark on.



## 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award Winner

### Heather Hylton, PA-C

Heather Hylton has been a leader of oncology APPs for the past decade. She has dedicated a significant amount of time and service representing PAs in oncology. In her most recent position at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center she was a Director of PA Services and helped build the APP program at MSKCC. Heather has also represented PAs in oncology through her service to APAO as President and other Board of Director positions. Heather has represented APs in oncology and helped build the relationship between APAO and ASCO. She has served as the APAO/ASCO liaison as well as serving on numerous ASCO committees. Her dedication to the profession and oncology was recently recognized by ASCO with her receiving the designation of a fellow of the American Society of Clinical Oncology. Heather has led in the study of burnout among PAs in oncology as an investigator in the past and current APAO sponsored projects. In addition, Heather currently serves on the AAPA Task Force on PA Burnout.

Heather continues to shine on the APP oncology field and has been a guiding light and role model for numerous PAs. Heather's dedication to APAO and the profession is exemplified by her numerous accomplishments and achievements. Heather's career to date serves as the leading marker for which all PAs in oncology should be compared. All of her accomplishments make her a wonderful winner of the 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award.

# PA Week Recap

We had an amazing PA Week, where we highlighted the “Day in the Life” of some amazing PAs in Oncology and Palliative Care! We started off the week by following Maitry Patel, a Canadian Certified Physician Assistant working within the Department of Radiation Oncology at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Toronto. She gave us an in-depth look not only at the field of Radiation Oncology, but also the daily life of a PA in Canada. Day two followed Lillian Rodich, PA-C, working at Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York City in adult inpatient BMT. We learned all about the processes of transplant, infusion, donation and the role of a PA in harvesting cells. Our third day was hosted by the PAs of Dana Farber and Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. We loved the shout-outs of appreciation from the attending physicians, not to mention the TikTok video. The Surgical Oncology PAs from Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia gave us a look

into a variety of settings on day four, including the operating room, outpatient IPMN clinic, melanoma clinic, and more. Finally, we concluded PA Week with some amazing tributes from the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, highlighting the PAs working in Pediatric Transplant, Infusion, BMT and Infectious Disease.

We are so thankful to all the outstanding PAs that volunteered their time to showcase their daily lives working in Oncology. You can find the highlights from our PA Week Takeovers on our Instagram page. Be sure to follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for more updates, highlights and giveaways to come.



<https://www.facebook.com/APAOnc>



<https://www.twitter.com/APAOnc>



<https://www.instagram.com/APAOnc>

## Where Are They Now?

### Update on Past Student Scholarship Winners



#### Brian Lasonde

***After graduating from your PA Program, where did you enter clinical practice and in what area?***

I relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area to work in the outpatient Head and Neck Medical Oncology Clinic at Stanford Health Care.

***What has been the biggest challenge you have faced entering clinical practice?***

Having patience with myself to learn over time. There is so much information to take in, and I have to remind myself to trust the process.

***What service could APAO offer to a new graduate that would provide the greatest value?***

A list of recommended resources and smartphone applications, there are so many to choose from!

***What advice would you give to a PA student considering entering the field of oncology?***

The NCCN Guidelines are a great place to start building a foundation of oncology basics and understanding the pathways through treatment. Finding mentors early who you can go to for advice, and building solid relationships with attending physicians and your co-APPs.

***What do you do when you're not at work?***

Lately during the COVID-19 Era I've enjoyed cooking, gardening, and biking.

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**Carly King**

**After graduating from your PA Program, where did you enter clinical practice and in what area?**

I finished PA school in the spring of this year, and last month (September 2020) I

started a one-year Advance Practice Provider Fellowship Program in Cancer Care at Stanford Healthcare.

**What has been the biggest challenge you have faced entering clinical practice?**

I am only one month into working, so my biggest challenges have to do with being a new graduate and understanding when and where to ask for help. Luckily, I have a very supportive position for continued learning as a PA-C.

**What service could APAO offer to a new graduate that would provide the greatest value?**

A virtual network of PA students. Not all of us are able to make it to the yearly conferences, but now with the virtual world being more accessible it would be interesting to have Zoom lectures or discussion groups with PAs who are working in

oncology who are willing to talk to students.

**What advice would you give to a PA student considering entering the field of oncology?**

I think PAs can have a very important and meaningful role in patient care in oncology because they can explain and execute so much of the treatment plan that is often daunting and dreaded for the newly diagnosed patient. I would encourage PAs to enter oncology and continue to blaze trails in the field.

**What do you do when you're not at work?**

Stay active by running, hiking, playing soccer. Keep in touch with my family in Oregon and the Midwest (from a distance at this time). Read fiction books, watch documentaries, keep up with current events, and go to see the ocean as much as possible.



**Emily O'Day**

**After graduating from your PA Program, where did you enter clinical practice and in what area?**

I am currently working at the University of Chicago Medical Center on an inpatient leukemia service.

**What has been the biggest challenge you have faced entering clinical practice?**

Taking what I learned in PA school and in clinical rotations and applying it to clinical practice. Despite having excellent training in school, it feels different when you're actually managing the care of a patient. I've learned to have patience with myself and appreciate the learning process as I gain experience as a PA.

**What service could APAO offer to a new graduate that would provide the greatest value?**

Educational resources would be fantastic! Or even an online CME hem/onc boot camp of sorts. There's a lot to learn as a new grad in oncology and it's very

easy to get overwhelmed in terms of educational resources, so having a reliable source with everything centrally located would be great.

**What advice would you give to a PA student considering entering the field of oncology?**

Working in oncology can be emotionally draining, however it is a very gratifying field to be a part of. If you're considering oncology, try to get your feet wet during PA school by opting in for an elective hem/onc rotation, and if that isn't available, try to seek out oncology patients on your other rotations.

**What do you do when you're not at work?**

I enjoy running, hiking, spending time outdoors, playing with my dog Henry, and (in non-COVID times) traveling the world.



# Burnout Study Update

The APAO sponsored research study of provider wellness, collaborative practice, and career satisfaction among Physician Assistants in Oncology is an ongoing project led by PAs Eric Tetzlaff and Heather Hylton. The research team presented their data from the first year of the project at the 2020 annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). The abstract was accepted for a poster discussion in the professional development track under the clinician burnout subcategory.

One of the most significant findings from the 2019 survey was the significant increase in Oncology PA burnout from 34.8% in 2015 to 48.7% in 2019. Among 2019 respondents, increased hours worked, sub-specialty, less time spent on direct patient care, practicing below full extent of education and training, dissatisfaction with collaborative practice, and perceptions of poor collaborative physician leadership were associated with higher rates of

burnout. Dr. Tara Sanft, Associate Professor of Medicine at the Yale School of Medicine, was the discussant for the session and noted “Burnout is universal, and no one is immune. We are all in this together and together we can come up with solutions”.

The poster presentation was featured in articles in Cancerworld and HemOnc today following the conference with an upcoming article in press with OncLive. The research team will be submitting the first manuscript from the project for peer review in the coming months so look out for the full-length publication to be available in 2021.

Invitations for the second year of the project went out to APAO members on October 26, 2020. The research team and APAO leadership appreciate the overwhelming participation from membership in the project and hope that the high response rate continues this fall.





## PAHPM Collaboration

The Association of Physician Assistants in Oncology (APAO) and the Physician Assistants in Hospice and Palliative Medicine (PAHPM) jointly announce a collaborative agreement to provide complimentary dual membership to members of our organizations.

This collaboration provides all current members of APAO with a free 1-year membership to PAHPM, and vice versa. This also provides each organization's members enhanced access to both surgical and palliative care resources, advocacy efforts, and CME and educational opportunities. We are excited to offer members of our organizations an opportunity to collaborate further and learn the value both of our organizations have to offer by proposing a limited time One-Year Complimentary Membership. In order to become a Complimentary Member of PAHPM:

- Use discount code: APAO20. When entered, the membership fee will appear as \$0.00.
- This offer will be available to you till the end of the year
- After one year, members will have the opportunity to renew at the regular Fellow Members rate. After that time, members wishing to join PAHPM will have to join at the regular fellow rate.



**HORIZONCME**

Looking for additional educational opportunities? Check out our partnership with Horizon CME that has two live educational sessions coming November 20 & 21. You can use code APPOS30 for \$30 off to pay just \$10 with lots of opportunities to learn and interact with industry sponsors to win prizes.

<https://apponcologysummit.mededmanager.com/store/live/search>

## Student Corner

The Student Outreach Committee is a new APAO committee that has been developed in response to the increased need for resources and networking opportunities for PA Students interested in the field of oncology. Our committee is excited share this year's planned projects to support students. We aim to develop new strategies to reach PA students interested in a career in oncology and develop resources that are easy and accessible on our website. One of our major goals is to compile a list of oncology contacts and elective rotations for students who are interested in oncology training. Our committee also plans to develop an online student networking series where we hope to share education, experiences, and mentorship. Lastly, our committee will work on incorporating student specific events at our annual conference. We can't wait to support students who share our same passion in oncology!

### Co-Chairs:

**Sarah Vitulli and Keara Barnaby**

# ASCO Update

By Heather Hylton

At the start of the leadership year, each new president of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), announces a theme for the term of their presidency. Dr. Lori Pierce, ASCO President for 2020-2021, announced the theme of her presidency to be “Equity: Every Patient. Every Day. Everywhere.” This very timely and important theme will strongly influence societal goals for the year.

In alignment with this theme, ASCO has launched a new educational series on social determinants of health and its impact on equity in cancer care. This series is offered at no cost and intends to shine light on how social determinants of health influence cancer care and outcomes. The first of these podcasts launched October 21 and can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5hSiz11ldA&feature=youtu.be>.

For those interested in exploring other themes in health equity, AAPA recently held a webinar, led by Deanna Bridge Najera, MPAS, MS, PA-C, DFAAPA, titled Bias: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You and Your Patients. The capture of the webinar can be found at AAPA's Learning Central. The webinar focuses on implicit bias and how this can impact the care provided to patients and includes numerous resources for further study. Category I CME is available for successful completion of this CME activity.

Lastly, ASCO eLearning, among its many offerings, has a course collection called Cultural Literacy. The collection includes CME courses on cancer care for sexual minority, transgender, and gender-diverse patient populations; caring for older adults with cancer; inequities related to cancer care access; and cultural humility. More information on this course collection can be found here <https://elearning.asco.org/coursecollection/cultural-literacy>.

If you are interested in advocacy work around health equity issues, there is opportunity to contact your lawmakers regarding H.R. 913 and its companion bill, S. 4742. The Clinical Treatment Act, as it is known, requires Medicaid to cover routine care costs (such as clinic visits, diagnostic testing, etc.) for patients on clinical trials. Sometimes clinical trials are the best treatment option for patients with cancer, and when routine care costs are not covered, it can be a hindrance to clinical trial enrollment. Making clinical trials more accessible also improves the overall quality of the research being conducted as there can be more diversification of the patient population enrolled on a clinical trial. For more information on The Clinical Treatment Act, please visit the ASCO ACT Network.

## Connect with APAO

