

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



"You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em . . ."

—Kenny Rogers, *"The Gambler"*

It is an odd feeling to be watching from the cheap seats after a decade of performing on the stage. Last week was the first time in years that I was in the audience at the Cancer and Leukemia Group B/Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology Lymphoma Committee meeting. After 10 years as chair, I recently resigned the post and turned it over to the capable hands of my colleague and friend, Dr John Leonard.

Dr Leonard started the meeting with a lovely tribute to my decade of leadership, listing the contributions he attributed to me and thanking me for helping to develop the next generation of clinical researchers. Then I watched as he ably directed the meeting. I must admit that it was rather eerie to see that the protocols I had spawned were now the adopted children of those much younger and more eager than me. Various junior investigators stepped forward to present "their" studies, ones that I had initiated while still in the leadership role. I had to repeatedly squelch my urge to stand and claim parental rights to the ideas. Other new study concepts were unlikely to become completed trials until long after I officially retire. I did make my way to the microphone a few times to ask a question, provide an opinion, or give a compliment, but then back to my seat I went, hoping I still appeared to be of sound mind.

I recalled how I had watched as Dr George Canellos gradually withdrew from the Lymphoma Committee after he had retired from the leadership role and the chair was bestowed upon me. He no longer attends the meetings, and I miss his presence. On the positive side, no longer being chair has its advantages: I do not have to prepare

the agenda or worry about getting to the meeting a few minutes late—or about leaving a few minutes early. I can sneak out in the middle when the snacks are put outside the door, and do not have to wait until the meeting is all over to dash to the loo.

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At the end of the meeting, I was presented with a splendid montage of some of the papers published during my tenure (and I quipped about those manuscripts still overdue!). The gang came up to sign it and add thoughtful comments, creating a masterpiece that will be hung proudly in my office—where the poster of Lance Armstrong used to be.

It was the right time for me to step down as leader of the Lymphoma Committee, and from other posts that I held until recently. I am sure that I can retain some role as counsel and mentor for at least a few years to come. But when does one recognize that it is time to leave for good?

Until next month . . .

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce D. Cheson".

Bruce D. Cheson, MD