

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



The 9 ball banked off the cushion and sailed into the side pocket. After a gentle touch, the 14 ball followed slowly in suit. And the 8 ball won the match, sinking into the corner pocket. Brad Kahl (who swears he reads these monthly musings) and I showed the young upstarts how it is done; kind of like what Jackie Gleason did for Paul Newman.

No, we were not out hustling. We were playing older lymphoma investigators paired with junior ones at the first Lymphoma Research Foundation Lymphoma Clinical Research Mentoring Program, a 4-day event held in Scottsdale, Arizona. The mentees and we mentors had gone off-site to dinner, where we sat interspersed. Next to me was a very bright and engaging young woman who discussed her research involving the newly approved agent, ibrutinib (Imbruvica, Pharmacyclics/Janssen Biotech). In exchange, I gave her some thoughts on how to succeed in academia. It was after dinner at the pool table in the bar where Brad and I reigned, undefeated.

Getting to the meeting afforded me a true travel challenge. Once again, I was reminded of the difference between a direct and a nonstop flight. I left Washington Dulles for Denver (not Phoenix as I had assumed), where it was -11°F and snowing. My flight landed late, but all I had to do was get off the plane, then get back on and into my previous seat. The flight from Denver to Phoenix was scheduled to land at 1:13 PM, and my session was at the conference center in Scottsdale at 1:30 PM. The program was adjusted so that I was the third presenter, which afforded me a modicum of breathing room. For once the gods of the airways favored me and I landed on time, hopped into a taxi, and made it to the lecture room at 1:40 PM to find that the prior session had run a bit over. Consequently, I was right on time.

I was delighted to have been invited to this workshop, the goal of which was to provide research training in the field of lymphoma to young investigators who ranged in level from senior fellow to junior faculty. The event was organized and chaired admirably by Kristie Blum and Soni Smith, members of the Alliance Lymphoma Committee that I chaired. When I assumed the leadership of the committee, one of the first things I did was to enact associate core membership for young investigators. They were the first associates I chose. Their performance was so exceptional that they rapidly became full members. And now the mentees had become the mentors; it was gratifying and I was extremely proud of them.

To become a mentee at the workshop was a highly competitive process. Each potential participant submitted an application that included a hypothesis-driven research proposal. A group of faculty evaluated the applications, with decisions made on the basis of the applicants' qualifications, demonstrated support from their mentor, and the quality of their research proposal.

The agenda provided the mentees a broad experience, with lectures from notable lymphoma experts. Mentors in smaller breakout groups critiqued the various research projects, giving guidance on how to improve upon them. There were presentations on innovative statistical designs and advice on career development, how to get grants, and how to publish the results of research studies. There was also advice on how to navigate the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Therapy Evaluation Program (CTEP), institutional review boards, pharmaceutical companies, and the US Food and Drug Administration. At our session on cooperative groups, Brad Kahl spoke on why young investigators should become involved in the groups, John Leonard gave guidance on how to join, and I provided my perspectives on what the responsibilities are on a group committee. Mentees were also given advice on how to select an appropriate mentor, and opportunities were made available to develop research collaborations.

I commend the Lymphoma Research Foundation for supporting such a worthy event, Kristie Blum and Soni Smith for creating a splendid agenda, and the many friends and colleagues from the lymphoma world who gave up days of their lives for the purpose of advancing lymphoma research in the present and future. It is essential that we cultivate the next generation of researchers in our field. I feel secure that with their intelligence, energy, and enthusiasm, these young investigators will continue the progress toward the cure of lymphoma as we old folks fade away, pool cue in hand.

Until next month . . .

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Bruce D. Cheson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bruce D. Cheson, MD