

For those in roles with high patient-engagement, such as clinicians, or patient advocates, the patient is never far from mind.

No matter how many medical advancements we make we will always have much to learn from patients. The experience of living through, or living with a disease like many of our patients have faced, have well equipped them to remind us of the realities of survival.

However, taking the time to read their stories reminds us that to them and to their communities, they are not asthma patients, or COPD patients, or even lung cancer survivors. They are parents, friends, or neighbors who have asthma, or COPD, or who have beaten lung cancer. Their disease does not define them, even when it does define their daily lives.

We remain grateful to the patients who share their stories with us and who remind us that life with these diseases is more than possible – it is critical. They remind us that every milestone is important: every treatment that makes their lives a bit more normal, every intervention that makes breathing a bit easier, allows them to focus less on their disease, and more on their lives. By hearing their stories, we can also inform our own work. Where do they see a need for innovation? What do they see that we may not because of their proximity to the disease?

Patient Voices is a great way to remind ourselves of their expertise in their own disease and treatment. But once a year is not enough. That is why the ATS, in conjunction with PAR partners, dedicates specific patient education weeks to individual diseases throughout the year. During those times we bring patient advocacy groups together with expert clinicians and researchers to shed light on disease and treatment, and facilitate a public conversation. We talk about the existing state of treatment as well as where treatments are headed.

Thanks to input from all stakeholders including patients, families, clinicians, scientists and researchers , we can continue to move forward...together. ■



Courtney L. White, CAE  
ATS Director,  
Patient Outreach, and  
Tobacco Control