

Epilogue

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 things to learn from patients. The experience of living through, or living with, a disease like many of our patients have faced, has made them well-equipped to remind us of the realities of survival.

Taking the time to read their stories reminds us that to them and to their communities, they are not an asthma patient, or a COPD patient, or even a lung cancer survivor. They are a parent, a friend, or a neighbor who has asthma, or COPD, or who has 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's 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 inform our own work – where do they see a need for innovation? What do they see from their proximity to the disease?

Patient Voices is a great way to remind ourselves of patients' expertise in their own disease and treatment, and once a year isn't enough. That's 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. By connecting our members and PAR partners, the ATS not only highlights the patient experience, but also encourages collaboration as researchers are able to connect with the many resources our partners offer, from grants to patient registries.

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



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