

# **Welcome Address**

**Dr. Paul Okunieff**

**Director, University of Florida Shands Cancer Center**

## **I. Introduction of Welcome Address Speaker**

**Dr. Odedina**

It is my great pleasure to introduce Dr. Paul Okunieff, Center Director for the University of Florida Shands Cancer Center. I will talk about not his accolades, his publications or grantsmanship [phonetic] or scholarship, but rather him as a person. The first thing which struck me when I met Dr. Okunieff early this year was his personality. He is not a true administrator; it was a pleasure to discover he is a very caring person. I have never been at any institution in which the Cancer Center Director actually takes the time almost on a weekly basis to forward information about prostate cancer. He introduces me to top-notch prostate cancer scientists, takes time to talk with me and follow-up regarding my work.

## **II. Welcome Address Speaker**

**Dr. Okunieff**

As Director of the University of Florida Shands Cancer Center, it is my great privilege and pleasure to welcome you to this prostate cancer disparities conference. It is exciting to see men and women from multiple continents and medical specialties, multiple other areas of excellence, medical research and otherwise, with the common goal of increasing our understanding of global disparities in prostate cancer of Black men. There are a number of complex issues to explore at this conference. Many of these issues have been poorly studied in the past, and probably none have been well studied. The list is long and includes race-based biological differences; access to screening and quality care; economic issues; environmental issues; cultural differences that influence decisions related to treatment; stage of disease when it is discovered, which I think is very different in different countries; education and awareness regarding health promotion and cancer prevention; and issues related to survivorship.

This conference is of particular importance to the University of Florida and Shands Health Care as the most comprehensive academic medical center in the Southeast United States. We are a leading referral facility with a heavy emphasis on prostate disease research and patient care, and have a great deal of interest and focus on disparities issues in cancer care in general, and prostate cancer in particular. We have campuses and hospitals both here in Jacksonville and in Gainesville that serve one of the largest populations of underserved/uninsured patients in the state, maybe the largest, and that includes African-American men with prostate cancer. For prostate cancer patients, we have a urologic department that focuses on cancer, and we are one of the best in the

nation that offers innovative treatments, options, state-of-the-art technologies including robotic surgery and other minimally invasive surgery techniques.

State-of-the-art radiation facilities are also available including intensity modulated radiotherapy, IMRT, as well as stereotactic body radiosurgery. Also, about 80% of patients we treat at the University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute in Jacksonville have prostate cancer; ours is one of only eight such proton beam facilities in the U.S., and one of 30 worldwide. Our research collaborations are statewide, national, and international; our researchers are currently working collaboratively with Moffett Cancer Center in Tampa on a nanoscale detection of prostate cancer for African-American men. In Gainesville, we have a vaccine therapy program. I commend Dr. Odedina and the University of Florida Department of Urology for their creative community outreach programs. They interact with those they need to work with in order to grow the awareness of, and education in, prostate cancer.

We are pleased to sponsor this program. We know that many of you have traveled from great distances to come here and we thank you for that; your participation is vital to the program's success. I would like to ensure that we continue the ideas that are generated at this conference, not let them be lost, and that we think creatively on how we might interact as we go forward such that two years from now when we have the next meeting in the Bahamas, we actually have made some really substantial progress.

#### **Dr. Odedina**

I also want to thank some key people who have made this conference possible including Senator Tony Hill, who is the person behind the prostate cancer effort in the State of Florida. It is amazing to see his commitment to our prostate cancer activities. I would also like to thank Dr. Levi McIntosh [phonetic] who his huge support in putting this symposium together, and a special thanks to Shannon [phonetic].

Before I recognize and thank our sponsors, I want to thank the person without whom I would not be here, doing everything that I am doing, my husband. I would like to recognize the National Cancer Institute, especially the Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences and the Division of Cancer Prevention, who have supported us, as well as recognize our sponsors, our Diamond Partners: the University of Florida Department of Pharmaceutical Outcomes and Policy, the University of Florida Department of Urology, the Mayo Clinic, the Federal Medical Center in Nigeria, and Olabecia Nobaja [phonetic] University Teaching Hospital. Our Gold Partners are the University of Florida Shands Cancer Center, the H. Lee Moffett Cancer Center, First Coast Audio Visual, and our Standard Partners, University of Florida Shands and Department of Defense. Thank you so much.

One last thing before we move to the speakers, everybody who is a recipient of awards, including our prostate cancer advocates, please stand up to be recognized. If you received an award to come to this conference, please stand up. [applause] I want to commend our speakers and the participants of this conference who have come here using their own money. They have come saying we do not need an honorarium; we prefer you use the honorarium to bring in advocates, junior investigators and students. So to all of you, our key speakers and those participants who paid the registration and who used their

money without us giving you a dime, thank you so much. I want to give you my thanks.  
[applause]