



# Harmonizing divergence: team challenges, hope, and triumphs in oncology

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Received: 12-FEB-2025

Accepted: 25-FEB-2025

Published: 06-MAR-2025

**Disclosure:** all patient and doctor names mentioned in the narrative are entirely fictionalized. This approach has been employed to ensure confidentiality and privacy, maintaining the ethical standards required for publication. None of the characters or scenarios depicted are intended to represent real individuals or events, but are an amalgamation of my experiences over the years.

### Divergence in the Deep End

It was one of the typical Mondays at the hospital, where even the coffee felt like it could not decide whether to perk you up or just blend into the background. In the cramped conference room, fluorescent lights cast a pallor that rivaled our patient's, eight-year-old Lucy. Her leukemia had returned once again, leaving us with no clear path but with a heap of contrasting opinions. The stakes were high, and our resolve was as scattered as Lego pieces in a particularly adventurous toddler's playroom.

Our team meetings were powered by a mix of oncology expertise, a research library that seemed to hold the secrets of the universe,

and an espresso machine with its own fan club. As for the team? Think of a sitcom cast, each bringing their own brand of quirky brilliance, ensuring that our meetings were anything but snooze fests. We may not have always stayed on topic, but we sure stayed entertained. The beauty and challenges lay in navigating both consensus and divergent opinions, particularly when each decision held significant weight for an innocent life.

### The Orchestra of Opinions

Imagine an orchestra where everyone plays a different tune. Welcome to our weekly team meetings. Dr. Patel, a sage oncologist with a fondness for reminding interns about "back in their day," advocates for comfort care. The young Dr Tan recommends experimental but potentially toxic therapy. Meanwhile, Dr. Jones, the clinical psychologist, worries about Lucy's emotional resilience in the face of further roller-coaster treatments. Ms. Hall, our pragmatic nurse practitioner, advises caution, citing Lucy's fragile physical state. Each voice is important and each view is part of a complex mosaic that makes patient management both exhilarating and exasperating. Like

Cite this article as: Iyer P. Harmonizing divergence: team challenges, hope, and triumphs in oncology. RHiME. 2025;12:9-11.

preparing a recipe without knowing the exact ingredients, our team dynamics hover between consensus and divergence, underlining the importance of flexibility, communication, and empathy.

### Families: Navigating Emotions

The Hoovers – Lucy’s parents – are seasoned at absorbing medical jargon, having become reluctant experts in the field. Their anxiety is palpable, shaping every discussion about treatment adherence and comfort for Lucy. They remind us that, beyond the diagnosis and treatment regimens, there is a child who loves dolls and unicorns, teaching us the value of humanity amidst the protocol.

Families seek answers, stability, and sometimes a glimmer of hope in the mire of medical discourse. We stand as guides through an emotional labyrinth, attempting to provide not just knowledge, but also solace. These encounters, steeped in fear and love, amplify our awareness of the heavy burden of our consensus or lack thereof.

### Physician Emotions: The Balancer’s Burden

Navigating without clear guidelines feels akin to walking a tightrope during a storm, juggling hope, ethics, and skepticism. Each of us, at times, struggles under the weight of uncertainty, wielding either confidence as a shield or vulnerability as a second skin.

Humor becomes a coping mechanism, a buoy amidst professional currents that threaten to overwhelm. It turns difficult discussions into bearable exchanges, allowing us to admit that “maybe we don’t have it all figured out” while acknowledging that every step forward is a mixture of conviction and humility.

### Team Dynamics: The Great Ballet

Team dynamics in pediatric oncology surpass mere medical deliberation. It is a ballet where everyone occasionally falls, yet through coordinated chaos, we somehow find

rhythm. It is the coffee room banter, the unscheduled pep talks, and the rare acknowledgment of our shared triumphs and tribulations.

Our shared purpose morphs divergence into opportunity, an opportunity to learn, grow, and develop a path amid ambiguity. Every difference in opinion is a step toward finding what can unite us, even in the absence of prescribed directives. In Lucy’s case, it’s about letting the cacophony guide us toward harmony in treatment.

### The Painted Future

While the path for Lucy remains undrawn, as clinicians, we remain artists in this ongoing tapestry. Our diverging pathways may appear like scattered brushstrokes, but together they create a bigger picture, one in which uncertainty also means possibility. Our team’s perennial journey through the maze of oncology teaches us that, while guidelines provide comfort, their lack does not mean the absence of care or resolution. It challenges us to consider each voice and opinion, and find value in every human connection that weaves into the fabric of meaningful patient care.

Ultimately, it is about finding and fostering connections in a realm that is notoriously unpredictable. It is about embracing the poignant humor of team divergence to ultimately paint a picture of hope, resilience, and unity – for Lucy, the Hoovers, and for us.

### Crafting Hope in the Midst of Uncertainty

This journey through oncology, marked by both uncertainty and opportunity, offers profound introspection lessons. It reminds us that while our professional lives are framed by science and evidence, the heart of what we do lies in understanding, compassion, and the human connections we share with our patients and their families. The challenges we face invite us to look inward, question our biases, and recognize the profound impact of our choices beyond the

medical sphere. By accepting the unknown with both fear and excitement, we can create a life filled with understanding and resilience.

Each team member's voice, whether in harmony or discord, adds a unique hue to this ever-evolving work of art: a testament to what can be achieved when care, courage, and creativity intersect.

As we continue to navigate through the uncharted waters of Lucy's treatment, we remain steadfast in the belief that every step forward is imbued with hope. It is this hope that fuels not only our work but also our dreams for a future where every child's journey through illness is met with improved understanding, collaboration, and, ultimately,

healing in its many forms.

Reflecting on my time with this band of brilliant misfits, I have learned that the secret to effective teamwork is a blend of mutual respect and shared bewilderment. If you're diving into cross-disciplinary chaos, remember: encouraging open dialogue is key, and bribery via cookies never hurts. Our meetings may sometimes resemble a circus with a side of medical jargon, but it's this delightful disarray that sparks real progress. Indeed, it's the awkwardness of our mismatched waltz that makes navigating the unpredictable world of medicine oddly satisfying—and keeps my coffee cup eternally full.

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