

AMWA NEWS

2024 Walter C. Alvarez Award Recipient Otis Brawley, MD

Michele W. Sequeira, MS, MBA, MWC / 2023 Annual Conference Committee Chair

The Walter C. Alvarez Award is bestowed on a member or nonmember of AMWA to recognize excellence in communicating health care developments and concepts to the public.

As chair of the 2024 Annual Conference Committee, I have the honor of bestowing this year's Walter C. Alvarez Award upon Otis Brawley, MD.

Dr Brawley is the Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Oncology and Epidemiology at Johns Hopkins University. He is an authority on cancer screening and prevention and leads a broad interdisciplinary research effort focused on cancer health disparities at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, the Bloomberg School of Public Health, and the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Dr Brawley served as chief medical and scientific officer of the American Cancer Society from 2007 to 2018, overseeing the largest private cancer-research-funding program in the United States. He served as director of the Georgia Cancer Center at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta from 2001 to 2007, and as professor of hematology, oncology, medicine, and epidemiology at Emory University from 2001 to 2018.

I first heard about Dr Brawley shortly after I started working as a medical writer at the University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center. I later came across his book, *How We Do Harm: A Doctor Breaks Ranks About Being Sick in America*, co-written with Paul Goldberg. The book struck me. It described Dr Brawley's experiences as a physician helping people cope with a medical system that they did not understand.

The stories in the book were heartbreaking. Some patients waited so long to seek cancer care that body parts literally fell off. Others were subjected to agonizing pain because they and their family members were unable to understand the complex medical information they were given. Dr Brawley's message was clear, and it applies to all of us: we must do better.

Dr Brawley is leading some of the efforts to address health care disparities. We, as medical communicators, can play a role in these efforts too; we can innovate to provide clear communication that informs and inspires patients and professionals alike. Please join me in congratulating Dr Brawley, our Walter C. Alvarez award winner, and listening to his talk on Saturday, October 26, at the 2024 Medical Writing & Communication Conference in New Orleans.

Author declaration and disclosures: *The author notes no commercial associations that may pose a conflict of interest in relation to this article.*

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