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Oncology's Level 5 Leaders

by Christian Downs, MHA, JD

In early October, ACCC held its 21st National Oncology Economics Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. As you can imagine, much of the talk at the meeting revolved around the imminent reductions that are facing providers in the physician office setting.

At the same time, cancer program administrators are concerned about how the cuts in reimbursement on the physician office side will affect their programs. Will they suddenly be overwhelmed with new patients? How will they deal with new pressures on their imaging, radiation therapy, and ancillary services? And, while not as great as those in the physician office setting, what about the impact of the reimbursement reductions they, too, will face in '05 and '06?

Think about this situation long enough and you could imagine a doom-and-gloom meeting with many long faces and heads bowed in defeat. You could imagine that—but you would be wrong.

Just the contrary, most of the more than 500 cancer care professionals attending the meeting were upbeat and positive. Yes, they are anxious about the economic future of cancer care in this country. But, nonetheless, they came to this meeting eager to go forward.

Sessions were well attended by those committed to finding solutions to the challenges ahead. Attendees networked with peers for ideas and strategies and promised to continue to work together to ensure quality cancer care for people in their home communities.

In fact, this meeting was a gathering of highly energized oncology

professionals. While all the sessions were well attended, three standouts were the special standing-room-only session on "Practical Survival Strategies for 2005," the "Introduction to Pharmacoeconomics" session, and the session on keeping up staff morale.

Each of these presentations featured practical, take-home advice for the oncology team to use in response to difficult times. And the individuals who attended these sessions were oncology professionals determined to work proactively to continue to do what they do best: provide quality care to patients in their home communities.

In his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins, identifies a particular type of leadership style called "Level 5 Leadership." The "Level 5" leader is the administrator who "builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will." Every one of the good-to-great companies Collins studied in his book had Level 5 leaders in the critical transition phase. These leaders are described as being timid and ferocious, shy and fearless and modest with a fierce, unwavering commitment to high standards.

Currently, community-based cancer care is facing a critical transition phase. And the cancer care leaders at ACCC's recent meeting stood ready to persevere through whatever challenges arise in 2005 and beyond. These professionals remain determined to face obstacles with a rock solid dedication to their peers and patients and dedicated to providing the highest quality care.

You could imagine that scenario at the Salt Lake City conference—and you would be right. ☐

