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## Slam Dunk

by Christian Downs, JD, MHA

General managers in the NBA pull out a lot of hair during the annual draft of college players. They spend weeks with potential players learning their strengths and weaknesses. They work for months identifying the needs of their team: a point guard, a center, a scorer maybe? The sports writers write, the sports bloggers blog, and then draft day arrives.

In most cases, general managers use their first pick on a player that will help the team in a particular position right away. Then something interesting happens. Many general managers put aside their interview summaries, spreadsheets, and videotapes. They stop focusing on the needs of the team and start listening to what their gut is telling them. And based on their instincts, managers draft the best player left. The NBA calls this process "drafting talent."

Those of us who deliver cancer care need to start "drafting oncology talent." While many of us spend much time working on "here and now" issues like drug reimbursement, off-label access, clinical trials, and patient access to life-saving treatments, we often overlook a critical fact: there soon may not be enough providers to serve all our cancer patients. If that happens, you better believe that the difference between ASP+5 and ASP+6 will seem trivial compared to patients waiting weeks for critical treatment.

This issue involves more than our physicians. With the expected increase in the number of patients, we will also need additional oncology nurses, pharmacists, radiation therapists, oncology social workers, and skilled administrators and practice managers.

So oncology general manager, how do you draft talent?

Well, the formula is actually simple. Step one: recruit good quality people to join your team. Step two: hold onto the skilled workers you already have.

This *Oncology Issues* focuses specifically on these two staff management strategies. Anne Peach and Cheryl Harrington from M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Orlando offer a detailed guide for doing this in their article "Recruit and Retain Top Oncology Talent: A Recipe for Success." If your cancer program is having difficulties recruiting and retaining nurse or radiation oncology staff, look at



what Sheila Moore and William Holden have done at their cancer centers. From partnering with educational facilities to coming up with innovative methods for keeping their staff satisfied, both programs clearly demonstrate the need to focus on the entire multidisciplinary cancer care team.

Looking at the bigger picture, the oncology community can help lay the groundwork for future recruits by supporting the Nurse Reinvestment Act, expanding our nursing schools and increasing what we pay the faculty, and demonstrating value to potential new recruits by rewarding those providers already in the field. At the same time, we need to support organizations like ASCO, ASTRO, AOSW, ONS, and other oncology groups as they develop long-term plans for the future of the oncology workforce.

If we do all of these practical and policy oriented initiatives, we will be on our way to "drafting talent."

*Swish.* 🏀