



Oncology Leadership in a Changing Environment

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Oncology Leadership in a Changing Environment

Every medical institution today is challenged to reach efficiency and productivity levels that exceed those achieved in the past. We have seen an incredible number of mergers and acquisitions in oncology in an attempt to attain ever higher levels of efficiency. In the future, implementation of information technology in all fields of medicine, especially oncology, will raise the bar even higher.

Managed care growth has continued to move forward at a rate that no one would have predicted just a decade ago. In 1996, 80 percent of the population was enrolled in some kind of managed care plan in the United States. As a result of these new plans, patients are spending more and more out of pocket for health care. Statistics show that as much as 20 percent of income is now allocated toward health care in general. At the same time, the demand from the public for quality health care continues to grow. All these forces threaten to change the rules for providing medical care.

In such an environment, the need for effective leadership in all areas of oncology has never been greater. I believe there are several areas in which all oncology professionals—medical, administrative, as well as their industry partners—could make a contribution to help shape the field of oncology and as a result improve the level of efficiency, and the level of care, provided to patients:

Advocacy. As health care professionals, our patients must be our priority and the focus of our advocacy efforts. By advocating for patients, oncology professionals will continue to succeed in our search for improved methods of detection, treatment, and follow-up of cancer in our patient population.

Time management. More sophisticated computer systems should be implemented to decrease schedule

conflicts and to improve the flow of information. Prioritizing commitments within our institutions, professional organizations, and elsewhere within the medical community will ultimately benefit patients.

Patient care guidelines. Patient care guidelines should incorporate the contributions of the entire oncology team, including oncology nurses, social workers, dietitians, and therapists. Such guidelines maximize the benefit of these oncology resources and help prevent waste and overtreatment.

Development of clinical research. NCI-sponsored clinical research, in conjunction with industry leadership, continues to flourish in the community because of the physicians, nurses, and other professionals dedicated to finding answers to important clinical questions.

Administration. Efficient and effective administration of all oncology programs is essential to survival. Administrative professionals need to work very closely with medical leadership to ensure that the challenges and changes affecting us all will have minimal effects on our ability to deliver high-quality care to patients.

It is only through effective leadership and cooperation between medical, administrative, and industrial leadership that we will continue to lead the world in oncology management.

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