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US Oncology: The Cancer Information and Management Company

by Lloyd K. Everson, M.D.

Created through the 1999 merger of the nation's leading oncology care companies—American Oncology Resources and Physician Reliance Network—US Oncology is a nationwide network of community physicians, clinicians, nurses, and administrators focused exclusively on cancer care and research. Today, US Oncology is the largest network of community-based physicians and clinicians in the country, uniting more than 825 oncologists and 2,000 oncology nurses in the battle against cancer. Our specialists treat more than 15 percent of all cancer patients in the U.S.

The company's services are administered through three large groups: physician services, cancer information and research, and corporate support services. These services encompass practice operations management, practice development, physician and staff recruiting, cancer center facility development, equipment and pharmaceutical purchasing, marketing, managed care contracting, information systems management, and cancer research. US Oncology provides these services through a local management team with extensive support from the company's corporate headquarters.

A FULL RANGE OF SERVICES

US Oncology is strongly driven to optimize clinical information sharing throughout its network. Consider the problem: A clinical trial in Arizona may have no link

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to a similar effort in New York... a Texas patient requiring therapy offered in Chicago may not even know such a treatment exists. If these independent pieces of progress never come together, the puzzle will remain unsolved.

Compounding this problem of fragmentation are reimbursement challenges, outdated information systems, and a lack of communication. All these factors impede the development and translation of timely information into critically needed strategies.

US Oncology's growth strategies for the future include continued innovation in the rapidly expanding areas of information management, genomics, and cancer research. Early in its history, US Oncology invested heavily in information systems, including an electronic medical records approach to linking clinical and economic data on its large clinical database. As the company moves forward into expanded areas of clinical research and genomics, we believe this will enable our organization to understand the medical and economic implications of newer technologies and therapies for our patients.

With more than 450 office locations and 68 comprehensive cancer centers around the country, US Oncology practices are readily accessible to the communities they serve. Each center offers a full range of cancer care services, including medical oncology, hematology, and radiation oncology, and in many areas gynecologic oncology, stem cell transplantation, diagnostic radiology, and pediatric oncology. The company continued to expand its cancer center development initiative in 1999; 18 new centers opened. Approximately 10 to 12 are expected to open in 2000. Through a vari-

ety of interactions with various professional organizations and patient advocacy groups, US Oncology physicians, clinical leadership, and administration are actively engaged in legislative and patient advocacy initiatives.

In 1999 US Oncology began to implement and place the positron emission tomography (PET) scanning technology in a number of its centers. This new tool is proving useful in the more accurate staging and diagnosis of cancer.

SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

Last summer, Birmingham Hematology & Oncology in Alabama, a 10-person medical group, announced its alliance with US Oncology. James E. Cantrell, M.D., a managing partner at the Birmingham oncology practice, wrote, "It provides us with access to sophisticated management services and national purchasing contracts, allowing the physicians to focus on improving patient outcomes, while the management team helps us control our costs. ... Our participation will allow us to share costs and clinical outcomes data."

Clinical research has been a key component of the services that US Oncology provides for our centers and practices. Today, we have more than 110 protocols ranging from Phase I to Phase III clinical studies. US Oncology practices accrue more than 4,000 cancer patients to these studies, making the organization one of the largest clinical research platforms in cancer research in the world today.

US Oncology is devoted to a brighter future of unparalleled patient care. This is why we are committed to ensuring that the knowledge we derive from our efforts will become common knowledge for everyone. ☐