



# Achieving Career Success in Oncology: A Practical Guide

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The field of oncology born in the 1970s has grown in depth as well as breadth, affording physicians in medical oncology an array of career opportunities. While these opportunities are exciting, choosing a career path among the varied choices can be difficult. The information needed to make the leap from fellowships in oncology has not been organized in most training programs. As a result of anecdotal information, survey feedback information, and educational session requests fielded by the Career Development Committee of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the need for a practical resource guide for career choices has been recognized. This guide is designed to focus on early career decisions in the broad field of oncology and to serve as a resource for fellows and physicians beginning their careers and for mentors such as training program directors, division directors, and practice managers.

The amount of scientific and clinical information presented to trainees has expanded in the last decade. There is virtually an explosion of molecular biology and resultant new therapies being developed. This is an exciting time, but the amount of material required for assimilation consumes the short training time that most fellows face. The time required for quiet reflection regarding their career goals seems to not be available during their training period, and specific information to help them choose among the various options does not exist in a concise form. They end their fellowship feeling somewhat unprepared for their choices and relying on peer advice while trying to negotiate offers. As a training program director, it is very rewarding to have fellows obtain confidence in their field and then to go on to a satisfying career—whatever that may be. Likewise, it is sad when fellows make choices that have not been well thought out or researched and result in unhappiness and a need for rapid change.

Oncology career choices range from traditional academic careers which are evolving to include increased emphasis on translational research and disease subspecialization within oncology. Private practice opportunities abound. This, too, is a changing landscape that now includes practice management companies along with traditional group practice and the almost-banished solo practice. Business skills are necessary to maintain a viable practice. Training for this is particularly sparse in most training programs. Industry is a relatively new career choice for oncologists. Careers in industry are increasing in number, and trainees are showing increased interest in this venue.

Regardless of the field chosen, physicians are almost always required to have leadership and management skills. Personnel need to be managed and budgets need to be prepared and overseen and all of this must be done in compliance with various regulatory and legal boundaries. All this must be done while attempting to balance career with home and life goals.

This resource guide is designed as a first step down the career path. It may also be useful for physicians with established careers who are planning a change.

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