Oncologist the Life Savers

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The leading cause of death in the world today is cancer (World Health Organization, 2015). Roughly 12.7 million people discover they have cancer each year (World Health Organization, 2015)! In the United States, one out of every four deaths is caused by cancer (Carson-DeWitt, 2002). By definition cancer is a disease of the genes, however is not just one disease, but a large group of over one hundred diseases, and the one thing these diseases have in common is they form from abnormal cell growth (Carson-DeWitt, 2002). Cancer is not a new phenomenon. Evidence of cancer has been discovered in Egyptian mummies and in written descriptions that date as far back as 1700BC (Narnis, 2013). Although cancer is not new to human history, efforts to understand, diagnose, and treat cancer has grown tremendously within the past few decades (Narnis, 2013). Efforts to understand, diagnose, and treat cancer can be contributed to the many years doctors and scientist fought alongside patients afflicted with cancer by studying the disease in an effort to save lives. Considering the number of diagnosed cancer patients and the number of death attributed to cancer, it becomes important to know more about the doctors specialized in diagnosing and treating cancer patients, the qualifications of said doctors, and the ethical standards of patient care that these doctors must follow.

A specialized doctor known as an oncologist is called to the forefront to help combat and treat the disease of cancer (American Society of Clinical Oncology , 2013). There are roughly three main types of Oncologist: medical, surgical, and radiation (American Society of Clinical Oncology , 2013). Each of these types of oncologists is named based on their primary mode of treatment. For instance, a Medical Oncologists specializes in treating cancer with chemotherapy, and other medications (American Society of Clinical Oncology , 2013). Moreover, a Surgical Oncologist specializes in the removal of the tumors and surrounding tissues during operation,
and performs biopsies if needed (American Society of Clinical Oncology, 2013). Finally, a Radiation Oncologist specializes in treating cancer with radiation therapy (American Society of Clinical Oncology, 2013). The American Association of Clinical Oncology also recognizes other types of Oncologist who are more specialized based on problem area or age of patient. Oncologist are in high demand, it is projected that the need for oncologist will increase by 18% by the year 2022 (World Health Organization, 2015). This is most in part due to the overwhelming amount of people who will be diagnosed with cancer and in need of an oncologist.

It is sometimes a concern of cancer patients to know the qualifications of the doctors treating them. Cancer patients can feel more secure in the fact that oncologists are very well-educated doctors who specialize in treating multiple types of cancers with the goal of saving lives. Oncologists go through rigorous training along with their many years of education before they ever even see a patient. The education and training for a career as an oncologist, requires five additional years of training in internal medicine and oncology, after completing medical school (Kelcher, n.d.). What that means is an oncologist must have a four year bachelor’s degree, a medical school degree, and five years of training in both internal medicine and oncology (Kelcher, n.d.). This is not an easy process. Each of the aforementioned steps poses many requirements that must be met before a physician can call him/herself an oncologist.

For example, before an applicant is accepted into medical school, he/she must complete and submit passing scores from the Medical College Admissions Test (Kelcher, n.d.). While a student is in medical school the last two years consist of rotations throughout a hospital (Kelcher, n.d.). Once all training and requirements are complete to become a physician, any physician wanting to pursue a career in oncology must first obtain certification in internal medicine, (Kelcher, n.d.). In order for a physician to even meet the requirements for The American Board
of Internal Medicine, a physician must complete a three-year residency program in internal medicine (Kelcher, n.d.). In addition, The American Board of Internal Medicine also requires physicians who have completed an oncology residency program, demonstrate their clinical competence, pass a certification examination in medical oncology, and hold a valid physician’s license (Kelcher, n.d.). Once the all requirements are met and the process is complete, then a physician can become an oncologist.

Cancer is a scary word filled with a lot of meaning and many emotions. Hearing a diagnosis of cancer can make a patient feel hopeless, fearful, and possibly confessed. Especially considering that the word cancer is an all-encompassing term used to describe over a hundred different diseases that can begin almost anywhere in the body and its tissues (American Society of Clinical Oncology, 2015). This is why it becomes imperative that oncologist make patients feel comfortable and informed. Here is one example written by Simon, S. (2014) and said by Kathy Harris, a cancer survivor, explaining how her oncologist was honest and helped her.

I spent 2 weeks in the hospital depressed and crying until my doctor said to me, 'You can do 1 of 2 things. You can sit here and cry and moan or you can take back your life and be strong and positive.' I took his advice and I became stronger. I became positive.

According to Simon and Kodish (2004) oncologist have many ethical responsibilities to make a patient feel comfortable and relay the reality of diagnosis. For instance, an oncologist must always explain the cancer diagnosis and stage of cancer to the patient, discuss all of the treatment options, recommend the best course of treatment, deliver high-quality, compassionate care, and maintain the patient’s quality of life by managing pain and other symptoms or side-effects, such as constipation, nausea, vomiting, and fatigue (Simon & Kodish, 2001).
Cancer is a serious disease that is not going away anytime soon. This year alone 12.7 million people will be diagnosed (World Health Organization, 2015). The doctors on the front-line trying to save patients afflicted with cancer are Oncologist. Oncologist are in high demand, it is projected that the need for oncologist will increase by 18% by the year 2022 (World Health Organization, 2015). This is most in part due to the overwhelming amount of people who will be diagnosed with cancer and in need of an Oncologist. Oncologists are a very specialized profession, requiring years of training and residency. There are many forms of specialization within the field of oncology. It can be stated that oncologists are much appreciated by their patient’s and many survivors of cancer would most certainly consider oncologists as life savers.
References


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