



A Physician's Secret to Staying Afloat

OA interviews Dr. Sudershan Garg, M.D. about the changing oncology environment

OA: What differentiates your practice from other community based oncology practices in your region?

SG: I am proud of the fact that our practice provides the most compassionate care in the area. We also have a broad base of care, as we see patients from everywhere between Cleveland and Pittsburgh. For this reason, our practice has been extremely busy and is consistently growing. We have also just implemented state of the art billing software that has helped us streamline our billing process, saving valuable time and money over the long haul.

OA: What strategies has your practice implemented to better manage the Medicare cancer cuts for 2005 and beyond?

SG: We are careful to reassess our reimbursement at the end of each month, as opposed to only performing this duty annually. We are reassessing the drugs that are given to Medicare patients and are extra careful to pay attention to unit billing. The evolving role of the community oncologist is very tough right now and seems to only be becoming more difficult in the years ahead.

OA: How long have you been practicing oncology? Please tell us your professional and educational background.

SG: I have been practicing oncology in the

greater Youngstown area for 29 years. Previously, I was Assistant Professor of Medicine at Hahnemann Hospital in Philadelphia, PA. I also spent some time at the VA hospital in Bronx, NY and Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York, NY. I am currently an Associate Professor of Medicine at NEO College of Medicine in Rootstown.

OA: Why did you choose a career in oncology?

SG: I completed my fellowship in hematology at NYU and learned a great deal about oncology on the job. I feel that both oncology and hematology go hand-in-hand, so this led me to pursue a career in oncology. I am board certified in Internal Medicine, Hematology and Medical Oncology. I am also a Fellow of American College of Physicians and a Member of American Society of Clinical Oncology.

OA: What would you tell oncologists just entering a community-based practice?

SG: It will be a very difficult challenge to go into community-based practice at this time. I would advise them to think three times before pursuing this route, unless they have a guarantee with a hospital. Solo community practice will be tough in the years ahead.

OA: I am aware that you have attended several of our Annual Physician Member Conferences. What OA resources has your practice used that

were brought back from this conference?

SG: I learned a great deal from my colleagues who were present at the OA conferences. We try to incorporate what others are doing in their practices with our own. I found the clinical and policy presentations at the conference to be very helpful. Current information was presented and we were fairly warned about the changes in Medicare legislation.

OA: Please provide background on your practice.

SG: Blood and Cancer Center is based in Canfield, Ohio, located halfway between Cleveland, OH and Pittsburgh, PA. The practice also provides service to St. Elizabeth Health Center in Youngstown and a hospital based-practice in Warren, OH. Blood and Cancer Center currently has 25 employees with three physicians, five nurses, four lab technologists, and an office and billing staff. On average, each physician sees between 150 and 200 patients per week.

OA: What is the most valuable aspect of membership in OA to you and your practice?

SG: Oncology Associates helps our practice obtain timely information about current events in the cancer community. They are also great for obtaining a volume discount on drugs. Anytime we have a problem OA is accessible and helpful.