Oncology Career Plan

An oncologist is a medical doctor who specializes in the treatment of cancers. The American Society of Clinical Oncology estimates that the demand for oncologists will increase by 48 percent by 2020, while the supply of these specially trained doctors will increase by only 14 percent over the same time period.

Education Requirements

Undergraduate Science Courses
Students on the oncologist education track must focus on math and science courses, including:

- Biology
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Life Sciences

First Two Years of Medical School
Medical students must be accepted into an accredited medical school. The first two years require intensive study in the sciences and additional work in outside clinical settings. Each medical school offers a somewhat unique approach to training.

Third and Fourth Years of Medical School
Coursework continues in the third and fourth years of medical school, but students must also use their training in cancer treatment centers and clinics.

Residency and Subspecialist Training
Assisting in clinical cancer treatment research or working as an oncology fellow is a goal for many
students during the mandatory three- to four-year residence program.

Oncology specialist areas include pediatric, gynecological, medical, radiation and surgical oncology. Each area requires special board examination and certification. Training grants and programs are available from numerous teaching hospitals and cancer treatment clinics.

**Continuing Education**

Oncologists must take continuing education courses to continue hospital privileges and to retain a medical license and board certification.

**Medical Oncologist Salary and Career Outlook**

**Salary**

According to Salary.com, medical oncologists earned a median salary of $258,421 as of 2011. The top ten percent earned $408,232, while the bottom ten percent earned $170,996.

**Career Outlook**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that employment for all physicians and surgeons, including medical oncologists, will grow 22% over the 2008-2018 decade, which is much faster than average for all occupations (www.bls.gov). Demand for physicians is expected to increase due to a growing aging population. However, the demand may be somewhat tempered by improvements in technology, which allow physicians to be more productive and manage more patients. The demand may also be reduced due to the increasing utilization of nurse practitioners and physician assistants, who may perform many of the same duties for a lower price. Physicians and surgeons who are expected to have the greatest job prospects include those who serve rural and other medically underserved areas, and those who typically treat elderly patients, including medical oncologists.

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