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In Regard to Wallner Et Al

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To the Editor:

We read with interest a welcome critique on radiation oncology fellowships by Wallner et al.

¹ We agree with the authors that fellowships for advanced training should be offered for 2 reasons: to focus on opportunities to which residents may have limited exposure during residency—such as protons or brachytherapy—and to provide a path to subspecialty board certification (eg, in Hospice and Palliative Medicine). Clinical Informatics training fulfills both criteria and represents an increasingly important aspect of medical practice.

Competency in informatics is an increasingly marketable skill with multiscale benefits ranging from translational research to institutional quality assessment. A recent American Society for Radiation Oncology survey demonstrated that a large majority of trainees and chairs value additional training in informatics.² Unique among medical specialties is the strong working relationships between radiation oncologists and medical physicists, who are often leading efforts in informatics. This partnership facilitates a natural cancer informatics role for the field of radiation oncology that could elevate its standing within the multidisciplinary oncology team.³

The American Board of Preventive Medicine currently offers subspecialty certification in clinical informatics⁴ with a training curriculum formed in cooperation with the American Medical Informatics Association.⁵ Current pathways toward certification include a practice pathway or a 2-year Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education-accredited fellowship. The “grandfathered” practice pathway includes either a “time in practice” option or masters/PhD training in biomedical informatics, but it will sunset in 2022. Several of this letter’s coauthors are board certified (C.D.F., P.E.G.) or board eligible (R.F.T., J.K.) in clinical informatics via the practice pathway.

To address the emerging need for radiation oncologist-informaticians, the Oregon Health & Science University,⁶ the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center,⁷ and the National Cancer Institute/Food and Drug Administration⁸ are offering radiation oncology-specific informatics fellowships designed for board eligibility in clinical informatics. These

fellowships are aimed to position graduates for jobs such as medical director of informatics and/or provide formal informatics certification.

In summary, radiation oncology residents should be aware of a board-certification pathway in clinical informatics and that multiple institutions have created fellowships geared toward training the next generation of oncologist-informaticians.

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