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Radiotherapy and Oncology

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Letter to the Editor

Response to Golden DW et al “A global call for increased interdisciplinary oncologic education”



Dear Editor,

We appreciate the comments of colleagues Akthar and Golden [1] supporting interdisciplinary training for clinical cancer specialists. Although the lack of such training is widely recognised, the potential consequences of this deficiency have been acknowledged only recently.

Akthar and Golden draw attention to additional educational modalities that can be utilised, including lectures and workshops. We believe that these methods could add value to the direct personal experience which inevitably accrues from exposure to the working practices of other disciplines. We emphasise that the time spent in the interdisciplinary experience need not be prolonged, need not interfere with the primary training curriculum of the specialist doctors and may potentially, by cross-disciplinary arrangements, be cost-neutral. However there may be some issues relating to the service provision that most trainees provide because the period of cross-disciplinary training may be at a junior level and service provision may thereby be difficult. This may be one of the main challenges to implementation in financially- and personnel-constrained health systems.

We agree that the potential benefits of interdisciplinary education and training should be more widely known and that those responsible for the training of clinical cancer specialists should endeavour to initiate such change as soon as possible.

Implementation of these proposals will require change to international and national curricula to include competences in other disciplines. Co-operation between national and international soci-

eties of different disciplines will then be required to enable trainees to gain these competences.

Dialogue to explore ways of implementing these proposals could be initiated at a conference or colloquium drawing together cancer specialists, national and international cancer societies and patient advocacy groups. If such an initiative is to be successful engagement with service providers and funders will also be essential.

References

- [1] Akthar AS, Golden DW. A global call for increased interdisciplinary oncologic education. *Radiother Oncol* 2019;133:227–8.

Niall O'Higgins^a
 Jesper Grau-Eriksen^b
 Lynda Wyld^c
 Kim Benstead^d

^a Department of Surgery, University College Dublin and Department of Health, Ireland

^b Department of Experimental Clinical Oncology, Aarhus University Hospital, Aarhus, Denmark

^c Department of Oncology and Metabolism, Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom

^d Department of Clinical Oncology, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom

Received 18 December 2018

Accepted 20 December 2018

Available online 11 January 2019