



Medical Physics and the Evolving Administrative Role

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Overview

- The role of the medical physicist is changing
- Administrative tasks are now becoming routine from staff management to budgets
- The healthcare environment is no longer conducive to big budgets and endless capital
- Salaries, CE credits, equipment capital and dwindling reimbursement have changed the dynamics
- More scrutiny is being given to costs, expenditures and large projects
- Timelines and efficiencies are now expected with delays being financially costly



Overview cont'd

- Leadership opportunities require training
- Studer, Harvard Modules and Hartman Profile are just a few examples of management tools
- The biggest key to success is putting in place a competent and cohesive staff
- Managing large scale projects such as a new linear accelerator or facility design can be challenging
- Timeline management is critical
- Critical path is an effective tool in project management
- Physicists are assuming a bigger role in the responsibility of quotes and budgeting along with the overall project



Rule number 1

- Never and I mean never have a meeting right after lunch!!!



My background

- Administrative Director for 13 years
- Currently oversee radiation therapy department that includes front office personnel, nursing, dosimetry and therapists
- In addition, responsible for oncology navigation, clinical research and cancer registry
- Duties include budgeting, staff evaluations, hiring/firing, program strategic development, leadership initiatives and other administrative functions
- I almost forgot: Machine calibrations, SRS planning, prostate seed planning, HDR planning, IORT support, IMRT QA and all other physics functions

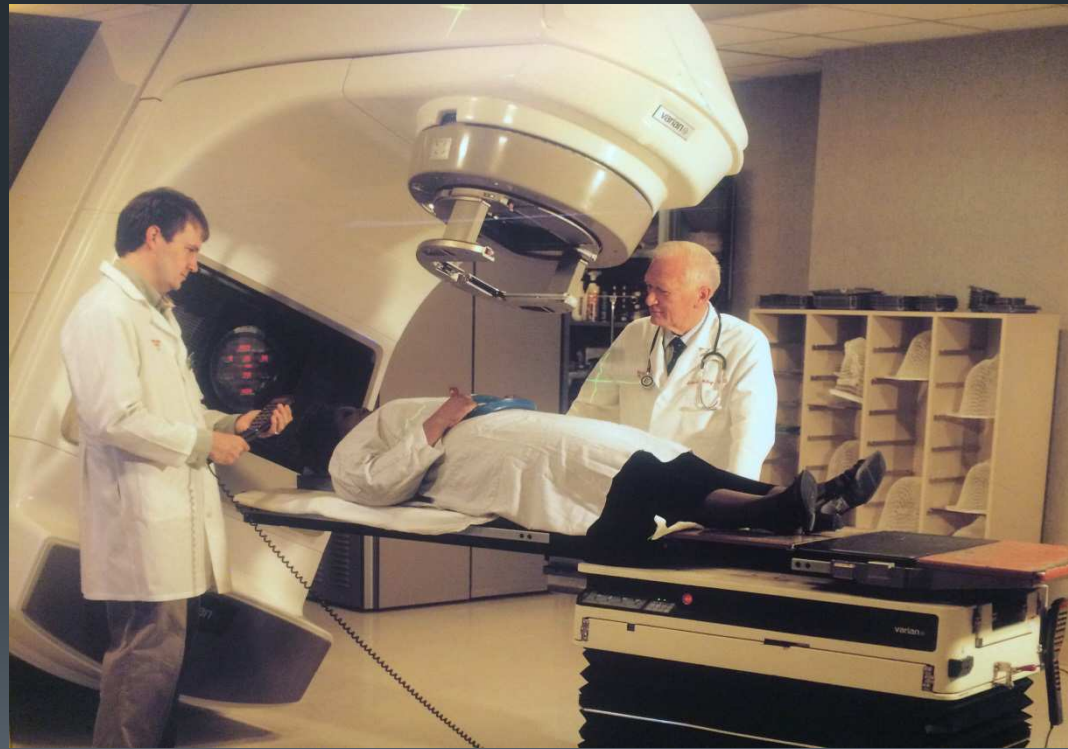
Parkridge Medical Center



Where did we start?



Yes... These machines did exist





Why is our role changing?

- There is a need to reduce overhead which in many cases is staff
- Physicists are seen in a majority of facilities as clinical leaders, knowledgeable and considered at or just below the physician level
- Our salary is often the level of senior administration (or higher), this leads to the natural ability to lead right??
- Physicists are no longer perceived as nerds... Well, maybe...
- In many instances physicists already supervise dosimetry and physics staff
- There is a natural tendency to have oversight with the technical staff
- Ok, what do you do when you get more responsibility?



Leadership

- The first step is to learn the language
- There are several key areas of leadership that must be understood in order to have success
 - Learn the tools: PLUS, KRONOS, Lawson, DOR
 - What is productivity and how is it defined? Man hours/stat?
 - What is P and L?
 - Proforma
 - Billing is an absolute must... CPT codes, bundled charges, DRG and its impact on inpatient services, Can you charge a port film when you charge a IGRT image session?
- It is time to go back to school
- Technical knowledge is of less value in the administrative role

Expectations

- The Administrative world has accountability in different ways
- Reports, budgets, meetings, implementation of initiatives....
- How do you justify staffing needs?
 - Not as easy as saying I need help...
 - FTE versus contract labor
 - Shared services
 - Billable procedures or lack of depending on workload
 - Productivity (yes again....)
 - Can you just show them TG-142, TG-51? Unfortunately no....
 - Word of caution.... Be careful not to overstaff. The results can be BAD for a lack of better words.





Managing staff

- Understand your team first and foremost.
- Not all staff are A workers, is that a good thing?
- My method on evaluating staff
 - A - the best at what they do, dependable and high motivated, work with little direction and be an asset to the organization, will move up the ladder quickly
 - B - Very good employees, hard working and dependable, need some direction and will fit well within a group, chance for career progression
 - C - Average, will get the job done but not much else, needs direction and follow-up, does not think outside the box, works in a team environment but doesn't excel
 - D – Underperforming in all categories but might be liked personally, often that is the only saving trait (Need to fire as soon as possible)
 - F – Fire immediately and don't look back!
- Is there a proper ratio in order to make a department work?

Managing staff

Staff rating	Percentage
A	30
B	60
C	10
D	0
F	0

Now that you have a staff, what do you do?

- Training is critical to success
- Always remember to adjust to the situation, be flexible
- An open door policy is always a positive in any work scenario
- Separation from the social functions and water cooler talk is an unfortunate consequence to be successful
- Get to know your staff... Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and most of all..... Get to know them personally
- Routine staff meetings are very effective but it is important to keep them fresh and short
- Become a problem solver, staffing conflicts can come at any time and can go from bad to worse quickly
- Be confident enough to make a decision and stick with it



Training

- Studer
 - Excellent customer service based program
 - A key focus is on staff and improving performance along with morale
 - Staff rounding
 - Stop light reports
- Hartman Profile
 - Tool that is effective in determining a candidate for a position
 - Analyzes strengths and weaknesses
 - Large cross section of data to compare results
 - Very accurate in depicting employee abilities in the workplace
- Harvard Modules
 - Education modules designed for specific areas
 - Good for managers
 - Designed to assist in methods and increase results



Departmental Operations

- You have a staff, you are trained, now what?
- The first and possibly the most important is to understand your role and the expectations associated with it
- Get to know your superiors on a professional and personal level
- Managing operations is difficult and requires tough decisions
 - Staffing ratios
 - Evaluations
 - Operating expenses
 - Cost cutting
 - Strategic initiatives
- Develop internally a road map for how you plan to approach your role



Operations cont'd

- Put out the fires first!
- Understand that things don't happen quickly in a corporate world
- Long range goals are important but don't overlook easy, low hanging fruit that can provide immediate help when it comes to operations
- As soon as possible do a complete review of your department, clinic or direct reports
- One of the most fundamental aspects of being successful in the management arena is to be two steps ahead of where everyone else is....



Project Management

- Large scale projects are common in radiation therapy
- A new linear accelerator can now cost upwards of 4 million dollars
- Additional costs such as equipment, training, construction and staffing levels must be considered
- Will the new equipment or upgrade result in new policies and procedures? Result in new billing new options?
- Can you afford to throw the kitchen sink into the quote! NO!
- The role of the medical physicist is valuable in determining the proper equipment and needs for the department



How do you budget?

- Must be involved from the beginning
 - Which equipment
 - Expectations of use
 - What is the final goal
- Define your role early
- Develop a realistic timeline. Don't fudge it!!! Administration will use that as the baseline for planning
 - Acceptance testing
 - Commissioning
 - Training
 - End to end testing
 - This is the beginning of project management
- Evaluate your needs from a technical perspective first and present a request that is comprehensive.
 - Don't depend on the vendor to tell you what you need
 - Don't forget the SRS diode....
- Highlight when you don't need equipment or chambers, show that you are being proactive in using discretion with capital



What's next?

- How do you approach a large project?
 - New accelerator
 - Upgrade
 - New HDR unit
 - New TPS
- Several key items that must be decided on the front end
 - What is your role?
 - Have input in the decision making process
 - Define your process and reasons for your timeline
 - Determine how much “say” you will have
 - Make sure you are in every meeting... Don't wait to find out
- Most major delays or mistakes can be avoided from resolving these issues at the beginning



Key components in PM

- Understand the critical path method (CPM)
- Get to know the project manager and the foreman
- Attend ALL construction meetings
- Define your expectations understand where potential issues might arise
- Be proactive, ask questions, make yourself available
- Be flexible, not everyone understands what you do and most don't care
- Learn your chain of command and use it when necessary

Where we start



Courtesy BrainLab

Progress



Courtesy BrainLab

Linac preparation



Courtesy BrainLab

Ceiling work



Courtesy BrainLab

Completed project!



Courtesy BrainLab



What wasn't discussed

- Hours of construction meetings
- Physical install of accelerator
- Enormous number of physics hours (acceptance testing, scanning, calibrating and commissioning TPS)
- Training of staff on operations of new equipment and/or software
- Most importantly.... Documenting every single problem, roadblock or unanticipated issue that arose



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Critical Path Method

- Understand the critical path method (CPM)
 - Developed in the 1950s
 - A method to schedule product activities
- The critical path is important to understand and identify
 - By definition it is the sequential activities in a project where any delay will delay completion of the overall project
- Although this seems basic, it is an important part of project development and implementation
- How many things can go wrong with installing a new linac?
 - Construction
 - Chiller
 - Electrical
 - Delivery of unit

Critical Path Method

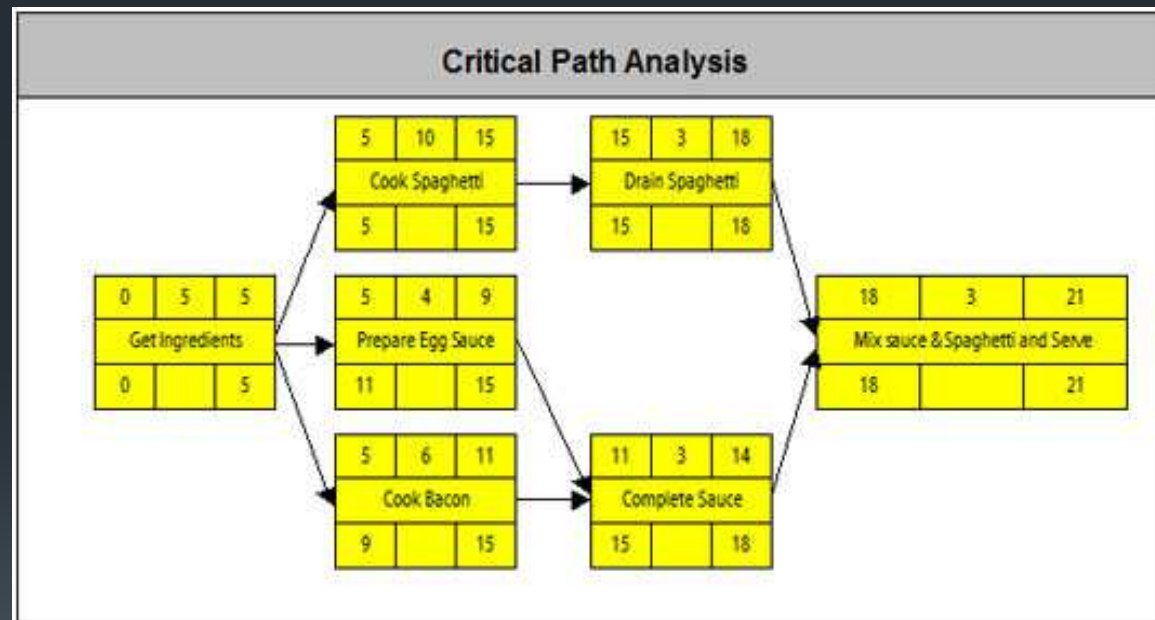


Photo Courtesy Lindsay Sherwin



Conclusions

- The role of the medical physicist is changing
- Opportunities for advancement now include administrative roles
- Benefits include strategic development, operations and technology implementation
- Training is the most critical part of effective management
- Your role changes... You can't be liked all the time
- Project management is an important process to understand in today's healthcare environment
- Financial constraints facing organizations require prudent budgeting and timely projects
- Take ownership in your role



Thank you