

YOUR POSITION HAS BEEN ELIMINATED

Bruce Curran, MS, ME
Associate Professor of Radiation Oncology
VCU Health System
Chief Therapy Medical Physicist
HH McGuire VA Medical Center
Richmond, VA

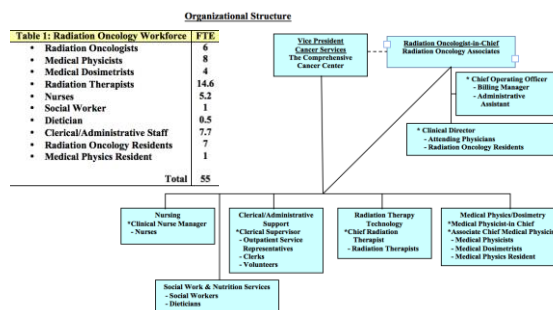
Disclosures

- Member, DICOM Working Group 7 (Radiation Therapy Extensions to DICOM)
 - Participation partially funded by AAPM
- Former Vice-Chair, Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise – Radiation Oncology (IHE-RO) Technical Committee
 - Participation partially funded by ASTRO
- Chair, Health Informatics Technology (HIT) Committee, ASTRO
- Member, ASTRO IHE-RO Oversight Committee
- Former Member, Oncology Working Group, Certification Commission on Health Information Technology (CCHIT)
- President-elect, AAPM
 - Funding by AAPM for Executive Committee activities
- Confirmed Workaholic

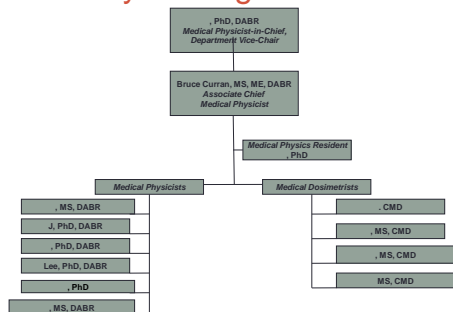
Brief Timeline

- 1973 – 2007 [the start of my career]
- 2/2008 – Started position as Associate Chief Medical Physicist at an academically-affiliated Hospital
 - One additional Associate Chief, initial plans to add a 3rd
- 6/2009 – Became sole Associate Chief
 - Responsible for all Medical Physics (previously RS+Research)
- 2010-12 – Responsible for Rad Onc budget
 - \$ 50M for main center
 - \$ 5M for free-standing CyberKnife Center
 - Transitioned to Department Admin hired in late 2012

Department Organizational Structure



Medical Physics Org Chart



And then

- 5/20/2013 @ 3:15 PM
- Meeting in HR with Senior VP (surprise)

The Letter

Dear Bruce:

This letter is to confirm to you that your full-time position as Associate Chief Med. Physicist at [redacted] Hospital is being eliminated effective May 20, 2013, as a result of organizational restructuring. The summary below describes the benefits you are eligible to receive in connection with your separation from employment on May 20, 2013. Your severance period begins on May 26, 2013, and will end on October 26, 2013. In addition, you will be paid your regular compensation through May 25, 2013.

Severance: You are eligible to receive up to 22 weeks of severance, which includes 4 weeks' notice or pay in lieu thereof, to a maximum of [redacted] beginning on the day following your last day of employment, which will be paid in installments according to the usual payroll schedule. Any direct deposit authorization(s) for your paycheck in effect at the time of your termination will continue. If your paycheck was not deposited directly into a bank account, severance payments will be mailed via first class U.S. Mail to you at the address above unless you notify [redacted] Hospital in writing of a change of address.

The Letter – part 2

If you receive compensation from any work performed during the severance period, you must promptly report such compensation in writing to Human Resources, including the terms and conditions of such compensation. [redacted] Hospital will be entitled to offset the severance payments by all compensation received for all full-time and part-time work, including employment or consulting work, performed by you.

As a participant in [redacted] flexible benefits program, your coverage will be affected as follows:

- Medical / Dental Benefits through severance period if I paid employee share w/COBRA enrollment
- COBRA available following that period
- Insurance Benefits end immediately
- Outplacement Assistance (one year)

Must sign at that time or package would not be offered

The following hours / days

- Basically on autopilot
 - Announced leaving to staff
 - Arranged coverage (I had IMRT QA that evening)
- Call Medical Physicist-in-Chief and Department Chair
 - Neither was told before I was
 - Senior VP indicated that there was no recourse
- It was intended that I pack up and be out that evening
 - IT resources removed at 5pm.
 - HR came down with 2 copy paper boxes for my office
 - Requested keys, phone, pager, etc.
- After recognizing that my office couldn't be packed into two boxes
 - Allowed up to 10 days to pack up
 - Must be after hours (5pm) to be less disruptive to staff
 - Escorted by security each time

Issues

- With cut-off of IT resources, all files stored at Hospital were inaccessible
 - Requests made through AAPM, ASTRO, and academic affiliations resulted in recovery of some files, but not most
 - Letters were sent from academic Deans of two institutions – no effect except for polite response
- Fortunately, I had backups of most things
 - E-mail backups had been done that morning
 - File backups were about a month old, lost most of more recent items.

The Good, the Bad, ...

- An aunt with whom I was very close had a stroke a month later. The severance allowed me to spend 3-6 months assisting my uncle with her care.
- My mother (now 96) needed help with finances and care, was able to spend a significant time with her and get things more organized.
- Helped a friend by spending 6 weeks in Israel doing some Nuc Med procedure writing (they paid expenses, but no salary due to severance agreement).
 - Was not interested in letting the hospital pay less!
- I had enough \$\$ in the bank to take another 6 months after the severance agreement to continue the above.

Why did it happen?

- Hospital having financial difficulties as well as concern over future payments due to ACA.
- Radiation Oncology patient load was down, though went up a month later.
- Travel
 - Was originally hired in recognition of national presence, improve recognition of Universities for recruitment, etc.
 - As a result, I had external commitments, which were supported by Chair and MPinC, but may have been perceived negatively by senior administration.
- Big salary, unique position, ...
- Hiring of Department Admin reduced my overall workload.

Finding a new position

- Was able to do this at my own pace, sufficient savings!
- Long debate as to whether to return to clinic, go back to industry, make a career path change.
- While unemployed, kept up my presence at national meetings, etc.
 - May actually have increased it, as I had more time!
- In the end, new position was complicated by my agreeing to run for AAPM President-elect.
 - Withdrew from one negotiation when it was clear that, if elected, the AAPM time commitment would be counter to the institution's needs.
 - Industry discussions all resulted in a decision that being that involved in AAPM would not be reasonable for their needs.
- Fortunately, VCU was willing to support me if I was elected, so we reached agreement.

Thanks

