MedScape Article Response

Walter J. Curran, Jr, MD, an NRG Oncology Group Chairman and Executive Director of the Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University in Atlanta responds to a MedScape article.

An article written by MedScape reporter Nick Mulcahy and posted on October 23, 2014 states that a group of patients with advanced cancer “has been forsaken” by NRG Oncology. Nothing could be further from the truth and the thousands of physicians, health care professionals, and researchers involved with NRG Oncology take offense at the inaccurate inferences.

This article characterizes NRG Oncology’s focus on conducting innovative clinical trials for patients with localized or locally advanced malignancies as in some way neglectful of patients with metastatic cancer. The physicians and physician leaders engaged with NRG Oncology research are fully committed as oncologists to improving upon the care of all cancer patients and participating in research which tests new paradigms across the entire spectrum of cancer presentations.

Any research group needs to focus on a defined number of health problems to make real progress and cannot study all health care issues. The scope of NRG Oncology’s research portfolio is the largest of the new adult network groups and will enroll the largest number of patients. The focus of our work largely on patients with localized and locally advanced malignancies in seven cancer disease sites is intentional and builds on the extraordinary accomplishments of NRG Oncology’s three legacy groups in these realms.

What the article fails to mention is that the other three adult network groups intentionally have a broader portfolio of trials seeking to improve the outcome of patients with metastatic disease, and these trials are available for enrollment by NRG Oncology physicians and by all physicians participating in the National Clinical Trials Network.