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Preparing for a Career in Oncology

John Bossaer, PharmD, BCOP
Professor
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OBJECTIVES

1. Get *excited* about career opportunities in oncology!

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DISCLOSURE
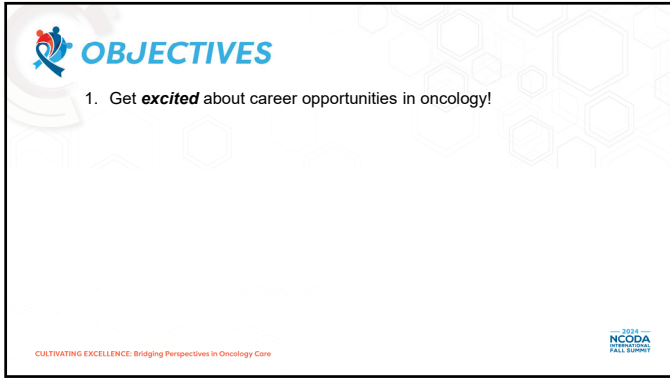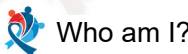
There are no relevant conflicts of interest to disclose for this presentation

Potentially relevant – *OncoPharm* podcast host/producer

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Who am I?

1. Hometown: Reynolds, IN
2. Currently reside in Johnson City, TN
3. Professor & Clinical Oncology Pharmacist
   • Not Peds, Not BMT
4. Purdue University, PharmD (2007)
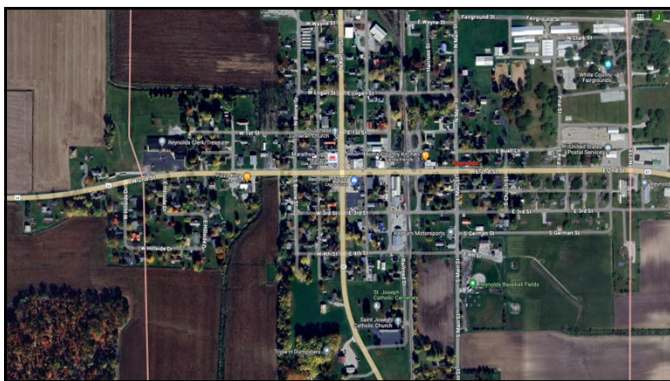5. Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)
   • PGY1 & PGY2 (Oncology)

ONCOPHARM

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Why Oncology?

- It's personal
- Good job
- High highs
  o Curable diseases!
- Navigating the lows
  o Challenging, but rewarding
- The **COOLE$T** drugs……. And the **most** drugs & therapy evolution

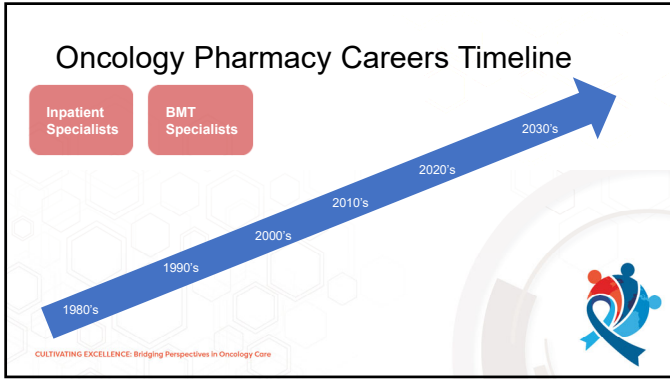CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE: Bridging Perspectives in Oncology Care

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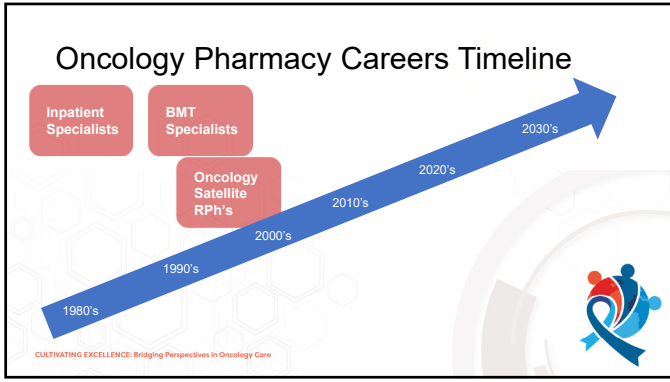## Oncology Pharmacy Careers Timeline

Inpatient Specialists

1980's
1990's
2000's
2010's
2020's
2030's

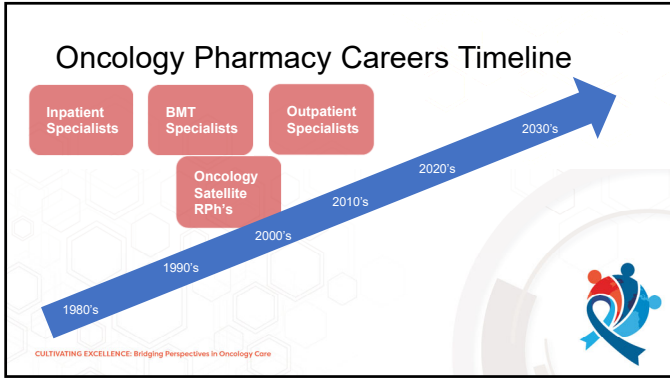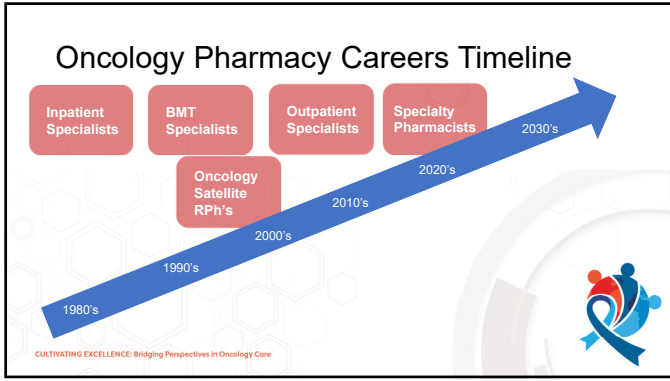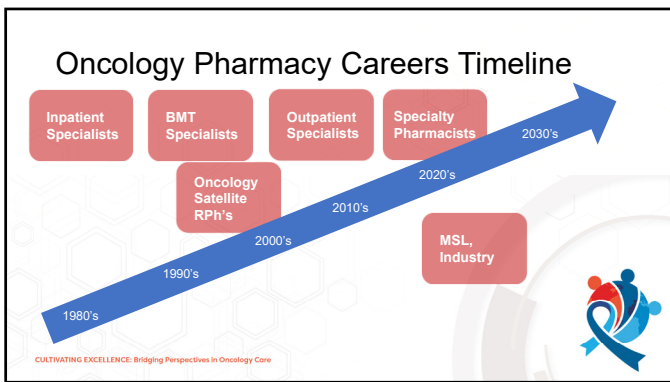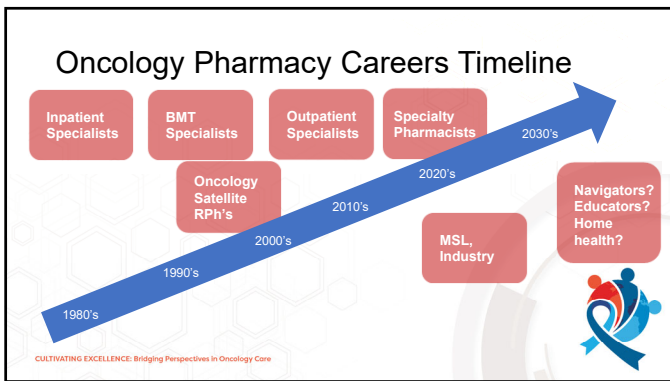CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE: Bridging Perspectives in Oncology Care

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Current Job Oncology Pharmacist Openings

- Pharmacist – Hematology/Oncology Infusion Center
- Clinical Pharmacist – Oncology
- Clinical Pharmacy Specialist - Bone Marrow Transplant/Cellular Therapies
- Oncology Pharmacist Coordinator
- Clinical Pharmacist, Ambulatory Oncology
- Pharmacy Clinical Specialist – Inpatient Hematology/Oncology
- Clinical Pharmacist II – Cancer Center
- Clinical Pharmacist Ambulatory Malignant Hematology-Lymphoma
- Pharmacist – Clinical/Specialty Services

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Value of Oncology Pharmacists

- Financial impact
  - Ambulatory oncology clinical specialists (University Hospital)
    - $111,111 estimated value of cost-avoidance and cost-saving only
  - Remote clinical oncology pharmacist impact (Private Practice)
    - 415% return on investment
- Clinical impact
  - Dosing, drug interactions, adherence, supportive care
  - Growing oncologist shortage → greater reliance on oncology pharmacists
- Administrative impact

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Patel MP, et al. J Adv Pract Oncol 2023;14:329-331.
Carroll M,et al. J Oncol Pharm Pract 2024;30:165-172

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"Defense Travels"

- Communication skills
- Empathy
- Prioritization and time management skills
  - Getting 85% of 7 projects done in a month
  - Getting 100% on 1 project done in a month
- Anticipating future changes
  - Learning from the past

- Competence
  - Know what you know.
  - Know what you *don't* know.

- The Science
  - Pathophysiology
  - Pharmacology
  - Pharmacokinetics
  - Genetics
    - Laboratory science

- Must be able to handle the **hard** questions
  - "Right" answer may not be known!

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Preparing for Your Career

Looks good to others — Posters, Research, Presentations, Volunteering, Networking

Is good for you — PSO, Leading, Challenges, Communicating, Work Experience

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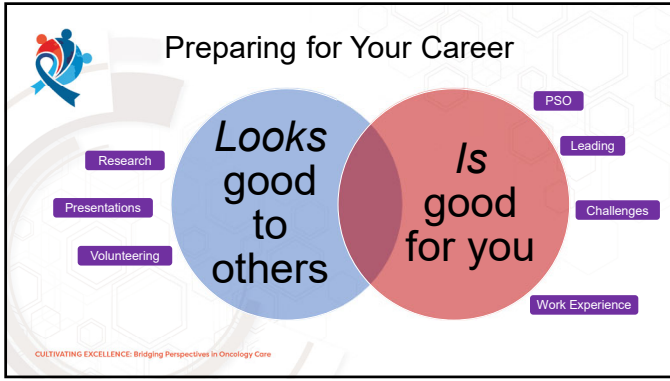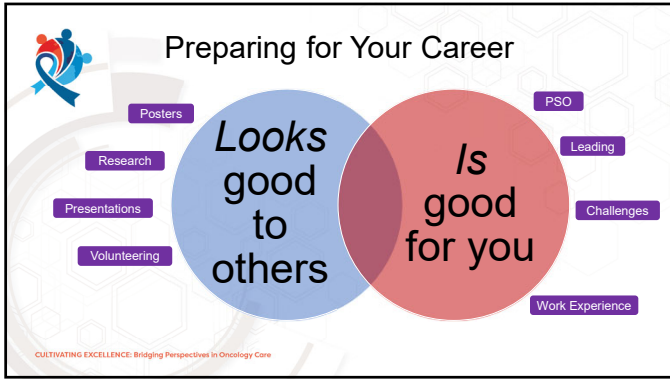
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Cautionary Tale: The Great Migration

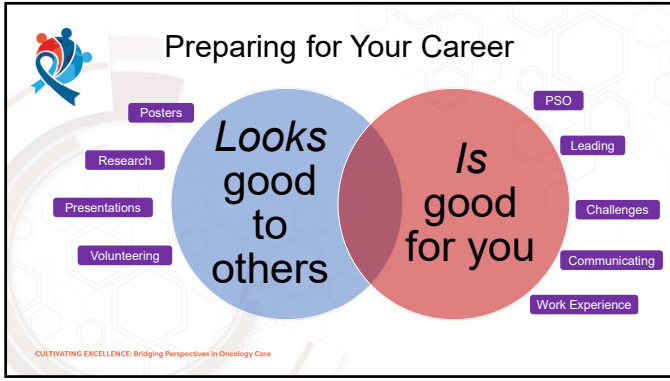- Exodus of clinicians to non-patient care roles in recent years
- Attrition & retention survey
  o 102 of 528 (19%) respondents left clinical practice recently
  o Citing factors
    • Lack of support (i.e. high patient ratios)
    • Lack of recognition; not valued
    • Admin./project time
    • Lack of workplace flexibility

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Rao KV, et al. J Am Coll Clin Pharm 2022;5:1112-1120

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What to look for in oncology pharmacy jobs?

- **Your career is a marathon…**
- The obvious: pay, hours, benefits
- Fitness for the position
- Culture
  o Culture of toxicity?
    ▪ Beware the "passion tax"
  o Culture of wellness?
- Support
  o Continuing education
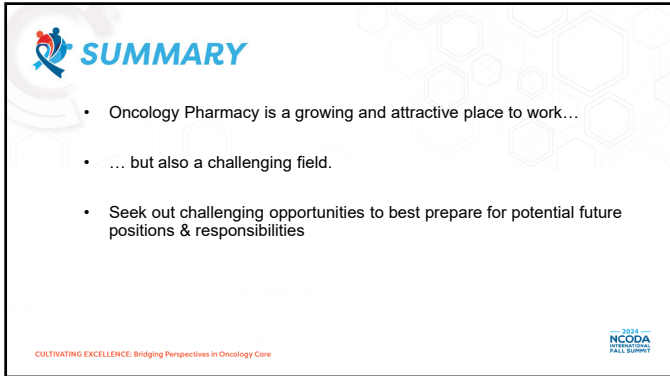 o Professional development

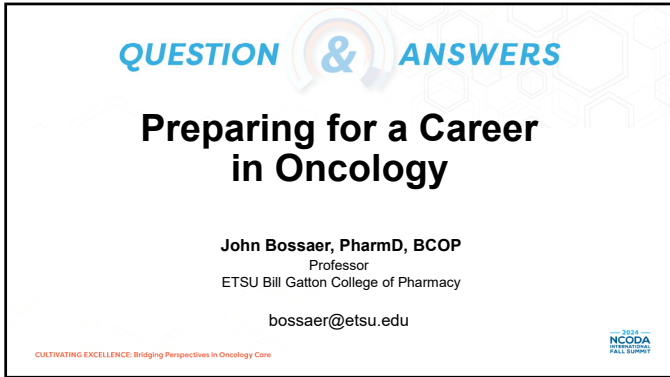CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE: Bridging Perspectives in Oncology Care

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SUMMARY

- Oncology Pharmacy is a growing and attractive place to work…

- … but also a challenging field.

- Seek out challenging opportunities to best prepare for potential future positions & responsibilities

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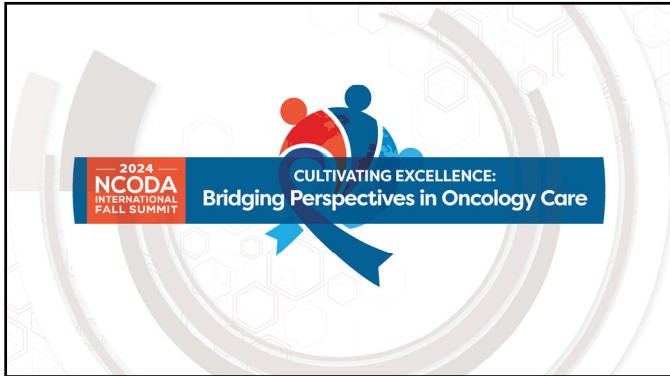
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QUESTION & ANSWERS

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