

Physics Allied Health Support Staff at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center

In addition to 30 clinical physicists and approximately 30 dosimetrists, there are 20 plus physics allied health support specialists in the Department of Radiation Physics at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC). These specialists include approximately 5 QA specialists, 3 brachytherapy dosimetrists, 3 post-doctoral fellows who are dedicated to clinical program development, 6 information management staff who are dedicated to treatment planning, and 8 accelerator engineers.

Many of these specialists are providing services, which historically were provided by clinical physicists. QA specialists are generally in the clinic from approximately 5AM until after midnight. They report to the QA physicist and conduct general QA tests (light field versus radiation field) and IMRT patient specific tests. The QA physicist reviews their work and forwards the results on to various clinical physicists. The brachytherapy dosimetrists are not part of the external beam dosimetry group and confine their practice to routine brachytherapy cases. The clinical post-doctoral fellows work under the direct supervision of a clinical physicist. The information management staff is responsible for management of image and planning data sets, as well as supporting the physics research applications. The accelerator engineers not only maintain the 12 accelerators, but also work with the physicists when the accelerator calibration needs to be adjusted.

Expensive medical physics time is being supplemented with less expensive allied health time. The appropriateness of this and the future implications on radiation oncology physics will be discussed.