



## Transformation Questions and Answers

### What does “transformation” mean in the CAP context?

The collective efforts under way, under the auspices of the CAP, to enable pathologists to change some fundamental aspects of how and what they practice over the next decade and beyond.

### Why does pathology have to transform?

Healthcare is changing and if pathologists don't adapt, they run a very real risk of being marginalized – receiving greatly reduced compensation or having no job at all. The goal of transformation is to strengthen the value proposition (i.e., unique benefits) that pathologists can offer to patients and colleagues in healthcare. *To define a role that no one else can perform as well.*

### What's the unique role of pathologists?

Pathologists are scientists who understand disease at the molecular level. They are in a unique position to

1. Help patients and their families as trusted advisors to understand the nature of disease, understand their diagnosis and determine the most appropriate therapeutic approaches; and to
2. Help colleagues in the healthcare system by ensuring that patients get the right tests at the right time.

There is both a scientific and economic imperative implicit in this latter role. If pathologists can reduce unnecessary tests ordered by other physicians or recommend tests that avoid expensive courses of treatment, they begin to demonstrate strong economic value to their institutions.

### What do we want pathologists to “transform” into?

Our challenge is to figure out—in partnership with our members—what the pathologist's future role can and should be. In general terms, we see the future roles of pathologists as:

- Providing direct patient care through diagnostic selection, performance, interpretation, and direction on optimal therapy options to patients and to clinicians
- Assuring the quality of lab tests and collecting, surveying, analyzing and using patient population clinical results to guide therapy, best practices and safety for patients and patient populations



### **What are the challenges facing pathologists?**

- Greater competition from other specialties
- Working in a *derived demand* model (i.e., someone else decides what you get paid) exemplified by bundled payments
- Cost pressure within medical institutions and the possibility (already seen in Europe) of medical technologists and PhDs taking pathologists' jobs
- Increasing demands for "specialist pathologists" that are straining small practice groups (which constitute 50% of the College's membership)
- Pathologists' own views of themselves as behind-the-scenes enablers of other physicians' work

### **What are the opportunities for pathologists?**

- The rise of genetic and genomic testing
- The spread of enabling technology, such as virtual microscopy
- Patient demands for greater insight into the origins of disease as a precursor to treatment or preventive action
- Government and private sector demands for higher quality biospecimen standards and handling
- A broad recognition that health information—70% of which passes through the laboratory—holds the key to more efficacious and cost effective treatment in an era of personalized medicine.
- Volume and complexity of diagnostic information is growing exponentially. Without a true integrator, it is just data. Pathologists can provide the right test and test result to the right patient at the right time.

### **How will patients be integrated into the transformation?**

To the extent that pathologists are seen as invaluable resources to patients and their families, we stand a much better chance of carving out and sustaining a distinctive niche in tomorrow's healthcare system. Part of securing the future role of the pathologists is clarifying what we do in ways that are easily understood to the public.

### **Pathologists don't work in a vacuum. How is the CAP communicating to other laboratorians and supporting them as the pathologist's role changes?**

The CAP focuses on pathologists, but we also work with allied associations who reflect the needs and interest of laboratorians. Articles in *CAP Today* and many of our education offerings are examples of ways that we currently reach those audiences. There are instances where our interests diverge with the laboratory community, but overall, our needs align: Strengthening diagnostic medicine strengthens laboratories.