

*Commentary & Opinion by...*

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***Proving that Pathology's Popular Wisdom Is Wrong***

IN THE ANATOMIC PATHOLOGY PROFESSION, THE POPULAR WISDOM is that any pathology group practice needs one or more hospital contracts as the primary source of specimens necessary to financially sustain the practice. Outreach specimens sourced from physicians' offices then represent a profitable supplement to the hospital business served by the pathology group.

Three years ago, this popular wisdom was challenged by pathologist Raman "Ray" Sukumar, M.D., of Dover, Maryland. For reasons described in our briefing on pages 9-15, Sukumar decided it was time to strike out on his own. His vision was to build a pathology laboratory in an office building, create a mobile pathology laboratory in a van, and bring pathology services directly to the doorstep of physicians' offices, ambulatory surgery centers, diagnostic imaging centers, and other outreach clients.

The business outcome to Sukumar's entrepreneurial effort demonstrates that it is possible to grow rapidly and make money offering general pathology services to office-based physicians and other non-hospital providers. In fact, over the 41 months since opening for business, the volume of specimens flowing into Sukumar's general pathology practice now supports three full-time pathologists!

I consider this to be one of the single most remarkable business stories in the anatomic pathology profession since we launched publication of THE DARK REPORT in 1995. What Sukumar has accomplished is worthy of study by any pathologist with ambitions to create a physician-centered, patient-friendly pathology practice. Sukumar exemplifies all the attributes of a successful entrepreneur, particularly his willingness to shoulder the financial and professional risk of building a new pathology business from scratch.

At a time when local pathology is under siege from an ever-increasing number of national labs, specialty test providers, and similar competitors, Sukumar has demonstrated that the business model of an office-based generalist pathology practice can compete locally on equal terms with all competitors. Long-time clients and regular readers of THE DARK REPORT know we hold the conviction that all healthcare is local and pathology services provided at the point of care are generally best for physicians and patients. Dr. Sukumar's entrepreneurial success demonstrates that this statement remains true and it should be an inspiration to the pathology profession.