

M. Maitlyn DeLand, MD
Oncologics, Inc.

Lorin: I am meeting with Dr. Maitlyn DeLand, a Radiation Oncologist, whose company is Oncologics. Welcome and thank you for your time. I know that you are up to big things in life and business and I truly appreciate your time. I really do. Tell us a little bit about your story, what you do, and how you got to where you are today.

Maitlyn: I come from a family of physicians, in fact, from generations of physicians. I came to Lafayette, Louisiana, after my residency at Duke. I realized that the level of cancer treatment in rural areas really needed to be improved and access also needed to be improved. As you know, Louisiana is a fairly indigent state and so I started the first clinic in Lafayette and have expanded to nine centers. I have actually developed centers out of state and I have six other affiliated offices. My drive has been to give every single patient the best care, and I have treated everyone regardless of ability to pay since 1982.

Lorin: Wow!

Maitlyn: I am on several committees with the Governor. We actually have done nurse navigation for years, especially with the indigent patients that are going to the charity hospital system. We make sure they understand their whole course of care and really lead them through it. We also send them back for their diabetes tests and make sure they're getting everything done. What I really try to do is look at that person as a member of my family and how I would want them to be treated. In fact, I just had an elderly patient come in today and she said, "You know, you are the only doctor that listens to me." Which, I do! I spend my time; I listen to them. I examine them. I do what I think is appropriate and that's really my mission and what I am here for.

I actually teach at Tulane and at LSU. I've helped develop their residency programs and during Hurricane Katrina, I helped people that were devastated in

the middle of treatment to find an 800 number. I found their doctors on emails and cell phones and helped connect everybody. Now we are much more prepared for that, but, at that time, nobody was prepared and I had one doctor ask me, “Well, how did you do that?” I just tracked people down through their friends, you know. I called somebody’s mother and found out about an ENT patient he had been treating, and so on. I like to treat people the way that I would like to be treated. I am actually an accreditor for the American College of Radiology, which means that a physicist and I go around the country and accredit different centers, which is a pretty in-depth process. We look at the quality of care and accredit them. I just believe that everybody deserves the best care and I don’t ever want anyone to think that they are a number. I do have patients that I refer out to larger places, but I have special people at those larger centers that I know are not going to treat them like a number. Certain people, I think, need specific care that perhaps I can’t give and I want them to see the right person. After we have TomoTherapy here, I will be the first person in the South, besides M.D. Anderson and the University of Florida, to have a proton beam unit. It is fabulous because it is a particle beam so you get no scattered dose like you do with radiation. With a particle beam, all of the energy is deposited at the tumor.

Lorin: Oh, wow! That’s a huge switch!

Maitlyn: It is huge, and it’s wonderful for kids. It’s also really good for prostate cancer and for so many tumors in your critical structures – around the eye and around the spinal cord. That is going to be a very exciting project that we are actually preparing for now.

Lorin: I have heard inklings about a book. Would you like to speak to that?

Maitlyn: Yes, I actually had a patient whose mother wrote children’s books. She was fairly well known in Louisiana and her son helped me get started. I wrote three children’s books, sort of with local help, and sent everything to Greenleaf. They

have been so wonderful helping me with my new set of books. All my books are for children. The first two that I did were Christmas books, but now I have a Busy Bee series for kids that is about ready to come out. I am also doing books for children with illnesses and I have just finished the book for a child with cancer. My son has had diabetes since he has four, so I just did a book on diabetes and each book has a super hero. Kids love super heroes, so I am trying to make it so that the child can read the book and understand better what's going to go on. I had one patient come in and tell me that he went to the doctor and his mother said he was going to take a test. Well, he thought it was a written test...

Lorin: Oh!

Maitlyn: ...except with a huge syringe. So I think children will do better if things are explained to them in a way that they'll understand. I'm also doing a documentary for children with cancer and each child gets a camera and they get to tell their story. It's really interesting because I have one child that said she would do it, but she didn't want to show her face, so she's going to film her kitten while she talks.

Lorin: I love that!

Maitlyn: I am very excited about it, and I am excited about my book series. I've also promised one of my friends who has a child with Down syndrome that I will address that. One of my patients has an autistic child and so I am going to write a book about autism, which is a very difficult subject, but I am going to try to touch on everything that a child faces because I think it's so hard for them.

Lorin: So, I am curious if you see yourself more as a doctor or as a business owner, or both?

Maitlyn: Well, I am primarily a doctor. I run my business and I think I've been successful because I have done the right things. I have treated everybody and I don't think

that we'd be having all of these problems (with healthcare) if people had done what I did! You know? I provide millions of dollars of free care every year. I can remember my great uncle getting hams and vegetables and stuff like that in exchange or having his lawn cut. I think everybody wants to be well and everybody should be cared for. So, I see myself more as a doctor and as one who cares for people.

Lorin: Got it and so genuinely, too. It's totally a part of who you are.

Maitlyn: When I know I've helped somebody, I really, really feel good.

Lorin: You sound like such a perfect example of a doctor, obviously very well trained; it's like you are the ultimate doctor. That's what every doctor should end medical school with – the desire to help whoever needs to walk through the door, with the opportunity to make money as well!

Maitlyn: I just finished speaking at Vanderbilt, where my daughter goes to school. So, I spoke with the premed students and one of the points that I made was that, think about all those wonderful teachers you had in school and that's the reason that you are here, besides the help that your parents have given you. But think about the teachers who are teaching because they love it. They don't make a lot of money; they are teaching because they love helping you learn. And I said, "That's the reason you need to be a doctor. You need to be a doctor because you love helping people and you love taking care of them." So, I sort of put a different slant on things for them rather than, "Yeah, I want to do plastic surgery, because it's going to be a great lifestyle."

Lorin: Exactly.

Maitlyn: That is really the wrong reason to do this. And the other thing I told them is, "You have to think about whether you are going to want to get up at two o'clock in the

morning and go back and see somebody that's bleeding. It may be exciting and dramatic when you are younger, but when you are fifty-five...? So I tried to explain to them that you are going to see all these different surgeries and all these different avenues that you could take, but you really have to think about what kind of family life you want. Are you going to have children? Just look at everything. So, the students really enjoyed it.

Lorin: I'll bet they did! It's such a refreshing message! I am curious, when you went to medical school and got your degree, did you have a vision for your business and so much giving and caring and serving everybody?

Maitlyn: I was actually with my grandmother when she died of breast cancer and I was at her bedside. I was also at the bedside of my other grandmother when she passed away and she had a stroke. For me, being in a hospital and seeing what my grandmother had gone through with her mastectomy and how she wanted to cook afterwards but couldn't lift the pot, and then when she passed away, that really spurred me to want to help people. I, in fact, treated my mother four years ago for breast cancer. And, I love what I do. I can't think of anything that I'd rather do.

Lorin: Yeah, it's your passion. That's beautiful.

Maitlyn: It is!!

Lorin: Yeah, so did you have a vision? How does vision play a role in your business if at all? Not everybody does have a vision.

Maitlyn: When I came and worked here, I saw that there were patients that were not treated because they lived in rural areas or lived too far away and would not get treatment because they did not have the money. So I put in smaller clinics, closer to home. I put one in Marie, Mississippi. You know, I upgraded the level of care and made it available to populations who otherwise would not have been treated.

Lorin: Did you plan that, over the course of time, I want a clinic here and here and here and accept those goals or did it just sort of happen without the planning?

Maitlyn: Well, some of it was planned. Recently, we put a clinic in Nacogdoches and that basically is between Shreveport and Alexandria. So, it's an over an hour's drive, which is very hard when you are sick and you are having daily radiation treatment. Someone who lived there actually contacted me; I had treated one of their relatives. He asked me what did I think about that and would I come talk with the hospital administrator? And I thought it was a good idea, because it was really a replay of everything that I had done in Southeastern Louisiana and in some places in North Carolina and Mississippi. I actually just put the first clinic in Dover, Delaware, because they had no clinic in Delaware outside of Wilmington! I don't own those places now, but it was sort of seeing that when you are not well, you are not going to make a big drive every day.

Lorin: So you did that out of necessity versus looking at the big picture of where you wanted to have it. It was more like there is a need here.

Maitlyn: There was really a need, and it's all about fulfilling it.

Lorin: Do you have a family? You work lots of hours, so how do you deal with all of the things that pull women business owners in so many directions?

Maitlyn: Well, I've been divorced for quite a long time and I have two wonderful children. My daughter wants to be a pediatric oncologist. She used to come in and help me with all my Make-A-Wish Kids and play with the children with cancer. The kids would always want Claire to come home with them. My son has also been helpful with the Miles Perret Cancer Center, which is sort of like the American Cancer Society, but it was named for a child who had a brain tumor that went to Andrew's school and he helps out there. Andrew has had his crosses to bear,

having diabetes since he was four and then almost losing vision in one eye. Then, he got epilepsy two years ago. So, all of these factors have been so hard on him. I think that gives me more insight, especially when I have someone come in with a child and the parent didn't hear the first two things that I said, because they were concentrating on something the child was looking at. I can relate to that because I know, as a mother, when I took my child in, that he would get fixated on something the doctor said and then you might miss the next three sentences. So, I think I understand what it's like to have a chronically ill child.

Both of my children have a lot of respect for what I do. In fact, my son will call and he'll say, "Mama, I don't want to bother you, because I know that you are helping somebody, but I have to ask you, can I do this after school?" And, it's very respectful. I think that I have set a good example of hard work and in being decent. That's really, I think, what a parent needs to do for his or her child.

Lorin: Yes, and you must have goals both as a doctor and as an author. Are there any words of wisdom around how to balance it all? We don't necessarily naturally create balance. How do you do that?

Maitlyn: For me, I really get a lot of energy when I do something positive. I divide up my time as best I can and I don't really have a lot of down time, but on the other hand, you know people always say, "Well, what is your exit strategy?" And I say, "I lock the door every day."

Lorin: That's a great line!

Maitlyn: I don't play golf. I do exercise, but I come home and exercise so I can spend time with my child. So, I've never gone on a vacation without my children and I don't take long vacations. I take short vacations and I call in every day to find out if I got any labs back or x-ray reports for my patients, so that they don't have to wait. So, I will ask my nurse, "Read what it was about Mrs. So-and-so," and I'll say,

“Call her and tell her that her biopsy was fine” or whatever, so that she doesn’t have to wait!

Lorin: You sound like a woman that absolutely lives your work and your work is not work.

Maitlyn: No. I think if you really organize well, that you can get everything done. Not to say I’m not tired sometimes. But, I know what my mother goes through. Sometimes when she sees her doctor, she won’t get a report. And they’ll tell you, “If you don’t hear from me, it’s fine.” Well, you always wonder, “Was I home? Did I miss the call?” So I think that it’s very important to really keep in touch with your patients and treat them like you would like to be treated.

Lorin: As a doctor, with your scientific mind, I am curious to ask you how intuition plays a role in your daily work, if at all.

Maitlyn: I have to tell you I have wonderful managers who have been with me probably at least 15 years, lots of them longer than that. I have a lot of trust in my chief physicist, my chief nursing officer, my chief operating officer, my chief therapist, my head dosimetrist, and my other managers. We are sort of a big family. And, even though we have 200 people, everybody knows that I trust them. They have meetings and I can’t attend every meeting and they know when it’s something very serious they are going to come talk to me about it, but I give them the leeway and the trust. So, I think that makes them more responsible and better managers if I don’t micromanage people and they obtain their goals. And, everyone knows that if they have a problem, I am going to help them. Nobody ever gets jealous, if I might help somebody with something with their child, because they know I am going to help them with something else. We have a really wonderful group.

Lorin: You’ve learned to hire people that you trust right off the bat, immediately.

Maitlyn: Yes. And people that aren't part of our culture don't stay in my office. Let me give you an example. I did an accreditation and part of it is usually very technical, but I walked in and a woman was crying in the waiting room. I got there with the physicist and a girl was at the front desk talking to a friend or something on the phone and this woman was crying. I walked over to her and I said, "Can I help you? Do you need some water? Can I bring you to the back?" Because, I didn't want her in the waiting room with everybody and I thought, "You know what? I would never have that front office person. They would *not* be in my office." So, everybody's here because they love to be here.

Lorin: Beautiful. So, another question that comes to mind revolves around confidence. So many women come to us and what they are asking for is to help them gain more confidence. What would you say to somebody if they were coming to you as a business owner who wanted to gain more confidence – to take more risk, to leverage, to make decisions, et cetera. What would you say about confidence?

Maitlyn: I can tell you when I was made a fellow of the American College of Radiology, I had somebody look at my nametag and see where I was from and say, "Well, who would have made you a fellow? You're from Louisiana. You're not from someplace that does great research or somebody...." And what I like to tell people is, "Everybody comes to a room in a different way. You might come through the front door, you might come from the back door, you might come through the window, but everybody's in the same room and that's when you can show your capabilities." And, typically, when I do an accreditation, and maybe somebody thinks because I'm not from an Ivy League School that maybe I am not going to find something, I'll walk in there and I'll say, "Why did you treat this hip prosthesis and subtract the monitor units?" Well, immediately they know I know what I am doing. So, if you want to take a risk and you want to have people understand what you can do, you need to show them. Sometimes, like I said, "You're not going to be led through the front door, but once you get in that room...everybody's equal."

Lorin: It's true! So, there's a lot about having respect for each other, including respect for you.

Maitlyn: Right; exactly.

Lorin: The thing that's totally striking me about your story is the millions of dollars of free care every year that you give away. I totally believe that as women, it's our nature to give. The other thing that is really striking me without words is your immense gratitude for what you have to offer at the same time. Gratitude for parents, gratitude for teachers...

Maitlyn: And staff.

Lorin: So, I love this sort of a mix of the two – so grateful, yet so giving. My sense is that those are probably two pivotal and foundational points that help you continue to see bigger things for your business and your vision. Could you speak to how gratitude and giving have both played a part in your success?

Maitlyn: Well, I think when you give, you always feel better. At least I always do. They always say when you give you also get something in return. Typically, what you get is a feeling of goodness that you have done something. I feel very blessed that I was able to provide this service and if I have a problem I have so many wonderful people to call on – different doctors that are the head of Harvard or the head of Saint Jude's. I just think that everyone should feel useful. I can go to bed at night and feel good about what I do.

Lorin: Where do you draw the line between people that you give free services to and those that you charge for? How do you find that balance?

Maitlyn: I don't really do that. When somebody comes in and they have cancer and are referred, whether it's a charity patient, a Blue Cross patient or a Medicare patient, everyone is treated the same in my office. So, I don't really know. I can have a patient that may have lost their insurance and I won't know that as a doctor. Sometimes they'll bring that up. Yesterday, I had somebody who didn't show up for her checkup and I said, "She really needs to come in." My nurse said, "Well, she lost her insurance." And I said, "Well, I'm still going to take care of her. She needs to have her check-up!" So, I think that's a very small thing to do. A person comes in and they are treated, and if it's a horribly expensive stereotactic treatment, it doesn't matter if it was free or if they had insurance; it just doesn't matter. You do the right thing and you do what that person needs.

Lorin: Yes, but look how society doesn't even trust that that would be okay. You know, it's amazing that it's okay in your office. That's so not the norm! You are such an icon! We need to get this story out, because you are really the doctor of the 19th century!

Maitlyn: Probably, but my patients are very grateful. I get patients from Mississippi...I just had somebody come from Shreveport because I have helped a relative of theirs. I am getting them in to see somebody at the University of Florida. I said, "That's not something that we can do here, but I know that they have the ability to that with the proton beam unit over there because I don't have mine yet." When people are ill, they panic, and I think they need to be steered appropriately and taken care of and have the feeling that their doctor is on their side.

Lorin: Yes, and it's not about the money. I am totally amazed at your ability to do what you do and keep it so blind for your staff so that the only people that really will know are the billing people and that's it.

Maitlyn: That's it. I don't even know if I get paid! It just doesn't matter because I want the treatment to be correct!

Lorin: You totally put service over money! And yet I imagine you still make money at the end of the day.

Maitlyn: I still do well and that's why I am wondering, "Why don't other people do that?"

Lorin: Yeah. You are such an icon. I want to call CNN and get you on the "Heroes" feature they do.

Maitlyn: Oh, goodness! But, it's really not a hard thing to do.

Lorin: No, it's not hard if your heart is in the right place and you trust the money. Like, as you trust your staff, you trust the money.

Maitlyn: Right, and the older you get you realize this is somebody's golden years and look what happened. They've worked so hard and look what happened to them or this is their only child. I have one patient who tried and tried to get pregnant, did all of the fertility treatments, and then got cancer. And then she's asking, "Did this cause my cancer? Did this...?" Each person has their own story and if you are not really *with* them, you're not helping them. I feel like I treat people with my intellect and my technology, but I surround them with my heart.

Lorin: That is absolutely beautiful!

Maitlyn: That's what I try to do. When patients come in they'll tell me, "You are the one that really listens."

Lorin: You are a testament to creating. There are so many women who could benefit from getting the "how" in which you create – the treating and doing and serving – still charging money for the people that pay and not worrying about those who

can't, and how you do it with trust. It is absolutely the method in which to create big things!

Maitlyn: It is! It really is, and cancer is such a devastating illness. A lot of my patients are very naïve, not the best educated people, and it really takes a lot of help to get them through everything so that they understand...and they just love me! It's great! They'll bring me little gifts. They are so grateful and they are very kind people.

Lorin: If we could only have more doctors go back to this way of treating patients, we would have a totally different world and wouldn't be in the place that we are right now with the whole health care conversation.

Maitlyn: I really think so, too.

Lorin: I am going to move on to the last question, which is what do men have to do with it all when it comes to women's success? Some people talk about the men that came generations ago that sort of paved the way and some people talk about their spouses – it varies with different people. So, I'm just curious, what comes to mind when I ask that question?

Maitlyn: What comes to mind are a lot of physicians that I work with. I actually am working on four patents with a very, very intelligent dermatologist to help cancer patients. You have to cross specialty lines, I think, to better help patients. What I am working on now are rashes and what's called hand-foot syndrome that harvested cancer drugs can do to people. You get this horrible rash when it's working and when it's not working, the rash goes away. I've had patients not want to take the treatment, but I have so many good male friends that are very prominent physicians like Doctor Khan at Saint Jude's. I can send him x-ray films on someone and talk to him about it. These are my mentors and these are people I highly respect.

My father was another wonderful role model. He invented the BackTech™ Back Machine, which is Beck and Dickinson's biggest seller. And last year, when he was in a coma, they wrote him a beautiful letter and sent him a huge framed certificate about how many lives he'd saved. He invented how to subtract the background of the body so that you could image tumors. He did the first monoclonal antibody image tumors to visualize colon cancer metastatic to the liver. He loved to teach and I know I like men that love to teach and love to help other people. I actually wrote a little note to the Chancellor at Vanderbilt that I could see that he not only wants to develop the college students intellectually and make them successful, but he wants them to feel like it's a family and to develop them socially. So, I think of men more as colleagues and mentors.

But my father is a very large part of my inspiration. I told him, "I am going to have patents, too!" He was the editor of a journal in nuclear medicine for many years and really one of the pioneers in nuclear medicine. So, I think that I get that love for teaching and writing and I really try to think about what's going to help this patient besides the cancer treatment. Why should they have that horrible side effect? Can't we do something about that?

Lorin: I love that your father has been an inspiration to you. Because I do think that we wouldn't be where we are today... I do think that we have to give credit where credit is due, not to duplicate what they've done but to take the things that are working for us from what they've already done and do it our way. I think that women's businesses are booming and they are just about to go even further.

Maitlyn: Right.

Lorin: We can't do business like men do business. We have different brains and it's very important to do it differently.

Maitlyn: I think a lot of men don't have that level of compassion and patience in their nature; it's just not in them.

Lorin: Yeah. I totally agree with you.

Maitlyn: But my father just was very kind. He was not focused on getting huge money on his patents; he would teach it. He loved to improve the medical care of patients and develop new technologies. He never held a grudge and he's shown me a good path. Everybody's not always going to be nice to you or kind or fair, but you just have to move on.

Lorin: Beautiful! Beautiful! This is a great story, Maitlyn.

Maitlyn: Oh, thank you!

Lorin: I totally love your heart! Oh, my goodness! Totally love your heart!