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Radiation Oncology Institute launched, receives \$5 million grant

Fairfax, Va., August 25, 2008 – To prepare the specialty of radiation oncology for the future, the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology has donated \$5 million to formally launch the Radiation Oncology Institute. Also called by its acronym, ROI, the mission of this new organization is to enhance and promote the critical role of the radiation oncologist in the world cancer community by supporting research and education on the life-saving and quality-of-life benefits of radiation therapy.

Theodore S. Lawrence, M.D., Ph.D., FASTRO, from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Mich., and Colleen A. Lawton, M.D., FASTRO, from the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, have been tapped by ASTRO's Board of Directors to lead the endowment campaign cabinet. Their goal is to raise \$10 million in capital to build the infrastructure of the new ROI.

“The time has come to research and quantify the benefits of radiation therapy and make clearer the role the radiation oncologist plays in curing cancer and improving the quality of life for people living with cancer,” Dr. Lawrence said. “We believe that open, objective research will demonstrate the value that radiation oncology brings to cancer care throughout the world.”

“The Radiation Oncology Institute has been established to develop innovative ways of enhancing the profile of radiation oncology in the world cancer community and to help prepare the specialty for the future,” Dr. Lawton said. “Our plan is for ROI to conduct objective research on the specialty to document the value, safety, efficacy and cost effectiveness of radiation therapy with the goal of ‘stepping-up’ the profile of radiation therapy within the medical community to ensure that cancer patients have access to the treatments that are best for them, their lifestyle and their cancer.”

Once the ROI is functional, it will serve as the chief philanthropic partner to ASTRO, strategically funding and advancing the specialty of radiation oncology through dedicated and broad programming in research and public health education and information dissemination. Possible programs include:

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- Commission or conduct research studies or impact analyses of new and existing treatment options.
- Conduct unbiased outcomes research to evaluate the efficacy and cost benefit of radiation therapy.
- Build a database of the field, including capital investment, workforce and practice structures.
- Publish data and trends for the public, providers, media, payers and other constituents.
- Use research results to educate cancer patients and their families about radiation therapy treatment options.

Of ASTRO's initial investment of \$5 million, \$1 million will be used for an endowment and \$1 million for initial seed funding. The remaining \$3 million will be used as a matching challenge grant to all ASTRO members with the goal of raising an additional \$5 million. In ROI's first phase, radiation oncologists will be asked to support the ROI. ASTRO's industry partners will be invited to contribute as well.

“ASTRO turns 50 this year. In our first half century, radiation therapy has made remarkable strides, and has become a mainstay in the treatment of cancer. Indeed, the majority of cancer patients receive radiation therapy, either as their definitive treatment, or along with other treatments like surgery and chemotherapy,” said Louis B. Harrison, ASTRO Chair. “With the ROI, we begin our journey into the next 50 years, and our mission to gather critical data, fund important research and educational initiatives in radiation oncology, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that cancer patients have access to the life-saving treatments required to maximize cure, and optimize quality of life.”

For more information on the Radiation Oncology Institute, visit www.roinstitute.org. Learn more about ASTRO at www.astro.org. To find out more about radiation therapy treatments, visit www.rtanswers.org.

ASTRO is the largest radiation oncology society in the world, with more than 9,000 members who specialize in treating patients with radiation therapies. As the leading organization in radiation oncology, biology and physics, the Society is dedicated to improving patient care through education, clinical practice, and the advancement of science and advocacy.

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