

Faculty of Radiation Oncology

Funding of radiation therapy

The Faculty welcomes the Government's announcement of the first proton therapy centre expected to be operational in South Australia by 2020. Proton therapy is a form of highly targeted external beam radiation that uses heavier particles instead of X-rays or electrons. It is particularly beneficial to paediatric patients, and adult patients with tumours in certain areas like the skull base or spine.

The Faculty's Particle Therapy Special Interest Group will support this facility to have a national focus. We also trust there will be government support, not only make treatment accessible to all Australians for whom it is indicated, as well enable the necessary research in this area.

Unfortunately, this announcement is in stark contrast to nationwide cuts in the Radiation Oncology Health Program Grants scheme to standard radiation therapy services that will impact on tens of thousands of cancer patients. The scheme is a Commonwealth initiative that provides capital funding for radiation oncology services outside of Medicare.

The effects of these cuts on the sector and on patient care are likely to be catastrophic in the long term. The Faculty has done a significant amount of advocacy work against the proposed changes in recent months, including several conversations with the Minister for Health and with the Department. We have also indicated our willingness to develop alternative proposals for saving that the sector would be more able to absorb without adverse effects on patient access to quality radiation therapy.

We encourage all our stakeholders to support us in our advocacy efforts against these changes. If you need any further information, or have any suggestions, please write to faculty@ranzcr.edu.au.

Radiation therapy for prostate cancer

The [Radiation Oncology: Targeting Cancer](#) campaign aims to increase awareness of radiation therapy as an effective, safe and sophisticated treatment for cancer, among cancer patients and their families, as well as health professionals, in particular GPs.

Targeting Cancer is currently focusing on advocacy in the prostate cancer setting, and our message is that before any man undergoes definitive therapy for localised (including locally advanced) prostate cancer, he should consult with a radiation oncologist about his radiation therapy treatment options.

The Faculty recently hosted a 'Design and Discovery' workshop, with radiation oncologists, GPs, consumers and other stakeholders, to formulate a strategy and develop a practical work plan for how to influence policy relating to prostate cancer referrals.

Engaging radiation oncology professional groups, government, consumer organisations and other key stakeholders is crucial to our success in advocacy. We have strong support from consumer organisations and key allies. Ms Lee Hunt, consumer member on the Faculty Council and a Cancer Voices executive member, has distributed information on prostate cancer treatment options to over 160 Prostate Cancer Support groups around Australia, receiving very positive responses and support.

Cancer Council Australia, the Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia and NSW Cancer Institute have developed a [Prostate Cancer Treatment Options](#) flyer which emphasises the importance of men seeing a radiation oncologist and being fully informed before they make treatment decisions.

Prof Ian Gardner, Principal Medical Adviser from Department of Veterans' Affairs has [written an article](#) to encourage their members to get full advice before having prostate cancer surgery.

Please like [Targeting Cancer](#) on Facebook, or follow [@targetingcancer](#) on Twitter, and help us promote radiation therapy as a safe and cost-effective cancer treatment option.

Dr Dion Forstner

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