



The National Association for Proton Therapy

For Immediate Release

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Proton Therapy Community Responds to GAO Report on Prostate Cancer

Calls on Doctors to Fully Inform Patients

Washington, DC, August 7, 2013 -- "A new report from the General Accounting Office (GAO) confirms the need for newly diagnosed prostate cancer patients to be certain that their doctors explain all of their treatment options, including proton therapy," says Leonard Arzt, Executive Director of the [National Association for Proton Therapy](http://www.proton-therapy.org) (NAPT). The report, "[Higher Use of Costly Prostate Cancer Treatment by Providers Who Self Refer Warrants Scrutiny](#)," reveals that physicians who self-referred prostate cancer patients in 2009 were 53% more likely to refer for intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) and less likely to refer them to other treatments, including proton therapy.

The GAO report, which is based on a study of Medicare funded treatment, states that, "financial incentives for self-referring providers -- specifically those in limited specialty groups --were likely a major factor driving the percentage of prostate cancer patients referred" for IMRT.

The NAPT and the Proton Therapy Consortium urge patients to ask their doctors to explain the risks, benefits and costs of all the appropriate treatments for their cancer.

"Patients and physicians have a number of options when approaching prostate cancer," Mr. Arzt says. "We believe that all options, including [proton therapy](#), should be available through an informed decision making process. The choice of treatment will have an enormous impact on the patient's health and ability to enjoy his life."

Currently offered by 11 centers in the US that are affiliated with major academic universities and cancer centers, proton therapy for prostate cancer is clinically proven to benefit patients while causing fewer changes in quality of life than either IMRT or another form of radiation, 3DCRT. Proton therapy treatment also reduces the risk of a second malignancy, when compared with contemporary IMRT. Studies have demonstrated little to no decline in genitourinary and gastrointestinal function for men treated with proton therapy and a faster return to pre-treatment function, compared to standard X-ray radiation therapy.

Ninety nine percent of proton therapy patients believe they made the right choice, according to an NAPT survey released in February 2013. Conducted by The Brotherhood of the Balloon, the study included results from one fifth of all men who had received proton therapy for prostate cancer.

Of the total spent by Medicare for all services, only 1/10th of 1 percent (less than 1 cent) goes for proton therapy. Of the total Medicare paid for radiation therapy cost codes, only 2.04% (2 cents for every dollar spent on radiation therapy) goes for proton therapy treatments, while payments for IMRT account for nearly 60 percent (nearly 60 cents) of every dollar spent on radiation therapy.

The National Association for Proton Therapy (NAPT) is a non-profit organization supported by proton center members and is "The Voice of the Proton Community". The NAPT promotes education and public awareness for the clinical benefits of proton beam radiation therapy. Founded in 1990, NAPT is an advocate for the advancement and future access of proton therapy. It provides the number one website for patients, physicians, health care providers and the news media. NAPT's site can be found at www.proton-therapy.org.

The Proton Therapy Consortium is a nonprofit corporation whose mission is to ensure availability and access to proton therapy for patients by educating regulators, payment providers, and policymakers on coverage issues. The Consortium promotes improving patient choice, facilitating appropriate use of proton therapy and encouraging cooperative research, and its members are world-renowned cancer centers that provide life-saving treatment to patients throughout the United States. Our members include Advanced Particle Therapy (in partnership with Emory University, Scripps Health & the University of Maryland), McLaren Health Care, The Hampton University Proton Therapy Institute, The Indiana University Health Proton Therapy Center, The Loma Linda University Medical Center, The Mayo Clinic, The ProCure Proton Therapy Centers, The Provision Center for Proton Therapy, The Texas Center for Proton Therapy, The University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, The University of Pennsylvania Proton Therapy Center, The Willis-Knighton Health System and University Hospitals of Cleveland/Case Western Reserve University.

The Brotherhood of the Balloon was founded in 2000 by Robert Marckini. The group consists of 6,400 men who received proton therapy, or proton therapy in combination with other therapies, for prostate cancer. Members are from 50 US states and 33 countries. They represent 10 US proton centers as well as three proton centers in Europe and Asia.

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