

# PROTECT ACCESS TO RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES



THE CULTURE OF SAFETY AND QUALITY IS WOVEN THROUGH EVERY STEP OF THE RADIATION THERAPY PROCESS TO ENSURE THAT THE SAFEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE CARE IS DELIVERED TO PATIENTS.



THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION (NRC) IS THE ONLY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY REQUIRED TO MEASURE BOTH THE RISKS AND THE BENEFITS OF RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES THROUGH THE LICENSING PROCESS, WHICH ENSURES SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR ALL DOMESTIC RADIOISOTOPE USERS.



ENACTING GOVERNMENT MANDATES TO ABANDON RADIOACTIVE SOURCE-BASED TECHNOLOGY IN HEALTH CARE OR OVERLY RESTRICTING ACCESS WOULD PUT CANCER PATIENTS AT RISK.

RENEWED AUTHORIZATION AND FUNDING FOR LOW-DOSE RADIATION RESEARCH, COUPLED WITH THE AVAILABILITY OF NEW TECHNOLOGY, WOULD ALLOW RESEARCHERS TO REAP THE FULL BENEFITS OF CUTTING-EDGE CANCER TREATMENTS.



**1.76 MILLION  
NEW CANCER CASES**  
WILL BE DIAGNOSED IN 2019.  
ROUGHLY **1 MILLION WILL BE TREATED**  
WITH RADIATION THERAPY.

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS USE SEALED SOURCE ISOTOPES TO DELIVER RADIATION THERAPY AND ALSO FOR EQUIPMENT STERILIZATION



# PROTECTING ACCESS TO RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES

## BACKGROUND

In the United States, it is estimated that more than one million Americans will be treated with radiation therapies in 2019. Radiation therapy requires strict adherence to policies and procedures that ensure secure storage, handling, use and disposal of radioactive materials used in cancer treatment. A 2016 Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) report<sup>1</sup> found that, for the past 30 years, there have been no violations with safety or security consequences, and the nation's robust regulatory infrastructure has appropriately managed the protection of materials. Despite radiation oncology's culture that prioritizes safety and security, there have been attempts to limit access to these curative cost-effective cancer treatments by those concerned about potential radiologic incidents. Misinformation can lead to fear-driven policies that could reduce access to radiation therapy. Additionally, pressures to abandon these technologies in favor of "replacement technologies" fail to consider that, in most cases, there are no equivalent technologies.

- ▶ ASTRO seeks to ensure continued **safe and secure access** to radiological sources and **supports laws and policies** that are informed, science-based and support the **highest levels of public health and safety**.
- ▶ Radiation oncologists and medical physicists receive **extensive training** in the safe use of radioactive isotopes.
- ▶ The NRC has a strong track record and is uniquely situated to **maintain safety and security for all domestic radioisotope users**, including the medical use of radioactive isotopes. Further, it is the **only** agency within the federal government **required to measure both the risks and benefits** of radioactive isotopes through its licensing process.
- ▶ ASTRO **supports renewed authorization and funding for low-dose radiation research**. Research, coupled with the availability of new technology, would allow for the comprehensive application of **cutting-edge cancer treatments and medical technologies**.
- ▶ Cancer care is highly personalized and having access to all therapies ensures the **most successful** outcome. Limiting access to radiation therapy could result in **lower overall effectiveness, higher mortality and recurrence rates**, and would represent a major step back in cancer care. Calls to **abandon radioactive source-based technology** in health care could interfere with physician and patient treatment decisions, leading to **less effective** cancer treatments.
- ▶ In addition to being **one of the leading treatments** available in the fight against cancer, the industry **also contributes to the financial health** of the country by employing **tens of thousands of individuals**. In addition to health care, radioisotopes play a **vital role** in all aspects of our economy, including agriculture, gas and manufacturing.
- ▶ We are **committed** to promoting policies that enhance the **safe and effective use of radioisotopes**. We ask that Congress and the administration strive for the same goals.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Report to Congress under Public Law 113-235, *Effectiveness of Part 37 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations*, December 2016.