

EDITORIAL

Comfort zone: The integral role of palliative radiation therapy



John Suh, MD, FASTRO
Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the June issue of *Applied Radiation Oncology*! Focusing this month on palliative radiation therapy, we are pleased to offer two comprehensive review articles that examine pediatric needs and considerations, as well as challenges and opportunities in common clinical scenarios.

In treating advanced cancer, The American Cancer Society emphasizes: “Something can almost always be done to help maintain or improve quality of life.”¹ Palliative radiation therapy is one such option that helps provide this much-needed comfort to patients with incurable disease.

Unfortunately for children, no consensus exists for a standard approach to palliative radiation therapy. As Dr. Tamara Vern-Gross describes, pediatric practice is extrapolated from adult palliative literature, but controversy remains regarding its appropriateness. Her thoughtful review, *Comprehensive care for the child or adolescent diagnosed with a childhood malignancy requiring palliative radiotherapy*, helps clarify differences between pediatric and adult palliative radiation therapy, while elaborating on early integration, communication, challenges, research and more.

The second review, *Indications, barriers, and paths to advancement in palliative radiation therapy*, describes evidence-based methods for advanced cancer treatment along with methods of enhancing research and education opportunities. This comprehensive update by Dr. Muhammed M. Fareed and colleagues describes ways to expand skills beyond technical areas of radiation therapy delivery to generalist palliative care competencies, including symptom management, psychosocial issues, ethical/legal issues and beyond.

In addition to a Technology Trends article on technical developments in palliative radiation therapy, we hope you enjoy an interesting array of research updates and case reports in the issue on reading levels in patient education materials, organ sparing in breast cancer treatment, gastro-esophageal junctional carcinoma, and spinal ependymoma. We’re also proud to feature the impelling Resident Voice guest editorial by Dr. John Byun who stresses the need for proactive involvement in the national dialogue on health policy.

Service Recognition: Steven Feigenberg, MD

Finally, I wish to extend my deep and sincere gratitude to University of Pennsylvania’s Steven Feigenberg, MD, for his more than 6 years of dedicated service on the *ARO* editorial advisory board. As one of our founding members whose time, ideas and outreach helped launch the journal in 2012, Dr. Feigenberg has authored, recruited, brainstormed and spent countless hours building the journal and refining it to its advanced online and print status today. Thank you, Steve, for your invaluable contributions!

Many thanks to our more than 5,000 subscribers as well for your continued support over the years. Please enjoy the issue, and have a safe, fulfilling summer season.

REFERENCE

1. American Cancer Society. *Understanding your diagnosis: Advanced cancer, metastatic cancer, bone metastasis*. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/understanding-your-diagnosis/advanced-cancer/treatment.html>. Accessed June 5, 2018.

Dr. Suh is the editor-in-chief of Applied Radiation Oncology, and professor and chairman, Department of Radiation Oncology at the Taussig Cancer Institute, Rose Ella Burkhardt Brain Tumor and Neuro-oncology Center, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, OH.