



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Australia and NZ cancer experts unite to target radiation oncology awareness**

AUCKLAND: Radiation therapy is a safe and effective treatment for an estimated 1 in 2 people with cancer, yet on both sides of the Tasman, numbers of patients treated fall well short of those who could benefit from this innovative cancer therapy.

To encourage greater recognition of radiation therapy, The Faculty of Radiation Oncology at The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) has released a new campaign, *Radiation Oncology Targeting Cancer*.

Radiation therapy is the controlled and targeted application of radiation to cancer cells. The precision of delivery maximises destruction of cancer cell whilst sparing healthy tissue. Radiation therapy is proven as an effective cancer treatment in many different clinical scenarios leading to cure in many and providing relief from pain and other disabling symptoms in people with more advanced disease.

Launched today at the 64th Annual Scientific Meeting of RANZCR held at SKYCITY Auckland Convention Centre and attended by over 1000 delegates from New Zealand and Australia, *Radiation Oncology Targeting Cancer* uses real-life stories from patients, doctors and radiation oncology specialists to raise awareness of this sophisticated cancer treatment.

Even though half of all cancer patients would benefit from radiation therapy in Australia and New Zealand, only a third of patients actually receive it. Associate Professor Sandra Turner, a radiation oncologist at Westmead Hospital in Sydney, says many people, including other health professionals, don't realise how effective radiation therapy is against cancer.

"It has been proven that around half of people with cancer of most types could benefit from radiation therapy, yet there is a lack of awareness as a treatment option and, or, poor access to treatment centres. People diagnosed with cancer should discuss radiation therapy with their doctor or healthcare team" she says.

A/Professor Turner says there is a strong culture of Australian and New Zealand radiation oncology teams working together to promote best practice: "The Radiation Oncology sector involves a highly collaborative approach to delivering the best care to our cancer patients. I am sure that this initiative will be welcomed by the sector and the public on both sides of the Tasman.'

The four-day conference will highlight the innovative work performed by the two nations. Associate Professor Chris Atkinson, a Radiation Oncologist at St Georges Cancer Care Centre in Christchurch and the Medical Director of the Cancer Society of New Zealand, says

"New Zealand and Australia are leading the way in radiation treatment technology. Australia and New Zealand are continually working to improve radiation treatment outcomes for patients. Recent advances have resulted in higher cure rates, fewer side effects and improved quality of life for patients with nearly all types and stages of cancer."

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A/Prof Turner and A/Prof Atkinson are available for interview.

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### **About radiation therapy**

Radiation therapy involves the controlled use of radiation to treat cancer either for cure, or to reduce pain and other symptoms caused by cancer. It has many benefits for people with cancer, including:

- **Convenient:** Delivered in a public or private setting, each treatment usually takes around 20 to 30 minutes. This means most patients can continue with their normal daily activities throughout treatment.
- **Pain-free:** Many radiation therapy treatments are non-invasive and pain-free.
- **Few side effects:** While some patients report no side effects at all, most people experience some mild side effects during and/or just after treatment. Long term, permanent side effects are much rarer.

To learn more about the benefits of radiation therapy and the *Radiation Oncology Targeting Cancer* campaign, visit [www.targetingcancer.com.au](http://www.targetingcancer.com.au)