News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW

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ROI awards grants to Drs. David Sher and Anand Shah for projects to examine the comparative value of radiation therapy

Fairfax, Va., July 15, 2015 – The Radiation Oncology Institute (ROI) has selected David J. Sher, MD, MPH, an associate professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of Texas—Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, and Anand Shah, MD, MPH, a post-doctoral residency fellow in the Department of Radiation Oncology at Columbia University Medical Center in New York to receive grants for their projects to examine the comparative value of radiation therapy (RT), in response to ROI's Request for Proposals (RFP) issued earlier this year. Sher's project is titled "Comparative value of transoral surgery and radiation for oropharynx cancer," and Shah's project is titled "Economic evaluation of SBRT versus surgery for stage I Non Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC)."

"We are pleased to fund two exceptional projects this awards cycle. Dr. Sher's proposal demonstrates a keen understanding of the key data necessary to help us refine treatment options for our patients with oropharyngeal cancer," said ROI President Theodore Lawrence, MD, PhD, FASTRO. "Dr. Shah is a promising young researcher with exceptional qualifications, and I am confident his research can lead to improved outcomes for non-small cell lung cancer patients. Both of these projects will generate the evidence needed to improve cancer outcomes, while slowing the growth of health care spending."

Recent progress in the treatment of oropharyngeal cancers includes strides in both surgery and radiation therapy (RT) that have improved the therapeutic ratio and provided more opportunities to preserve swallowing function and maintain quality of life for patients. With the $200,000 grant award, Sher and his team will utilize data from the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER)-Medicare database and the HealthCore Integrated Research Database to identify patients with oropharyngeal cancer (OPC) who were treated with transoral surgery versus RT and concurrent chemoradiotherapy (CRT). Survival, toxicity and accrued costs for patients will be aggregated and analyzed. Researchers will assess the patterns of care in the management of OPC as well as determine predictors of improved outcomes following primary surgery versus RT and CRT.

Sher's co-investigators include professors and researchers from the Division of Outcomes and Health Services Research at the University of Texas—Southwestern Medical Center, the Department of Statistics at Texas A & M University and the Government and Academic Research Department of HealthCore, Inc. Sher's primary academic is comparative effectiveness research in head and neck and lung cancers. He earned his medical degree at Harvard Medical School and his Master of Public Health degree from the Harvard School of Public Health. Sher previously received a grant from the Lung Cancer Research Foundation as the principal investigator for "Quality-of-life and costs following stereotactic body radiotherapy for stage I non-small cell lung cancer," and a Health Services Research Fellowship from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

Shah will receive a $40,000 grant for his one-year project to complete an intensive economic evaluation of the comparative value of stereotactic body radiotherapy (SBRT) versus surgery for stage I NSCLC. As the cost and complexity of caring for patients with lung cancer rises, it is increasingly important to optimize the delivery of high-value care and health outcomes per-dollar-spent. Shah's novel approach will examine if outcomes are impacted by care setting, academic vs. nonacademic, evaluate relative cost-effectiveness and ultimately propose an episode-based payment definition for lung cancer SBRT.

Shah is Chief Resident in his final year of residency at Columbia University Medical Center, and he will be dedicating a significant portion of his time to this research project. He completed his medical degree at the University of Pennsylvania, where he was also a Health Services and Economics Fellow. Co-investigators and advisors for the project include health economists and clinicians at Columbia University Medical Center, New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Columbia Business School, the University of Pennsylvania and Health Care Incentives Improvement Institute (HCI3).

ABOUT ROI

The Radiation Oncology Institute (ROI) is a non-profit, 501 (c)(3) foundation created in 2006 by the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) Board of Directors to support research and education efforts around the world that enhance and confirm the critical role of radiation therapy in improving cancer treatment. ROI strategically funds research on new and existing radiation therapy treatments to identify links between best practices and improved outcomes, to evaluate the efficacy and cost-benefit of radiation therapy and to foster multi-institutional research in radiation oncology. For more information, visit www.roinstitute.org.

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