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ASTRO congratulates Medicare on its 50th Anniversary

Millions of patients with cancer have benefitted from cancer screenings and radiation therapy thanks to landmark laws

Fairfax, Va., July 30, 2015 – The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) celebrates the landmark Medicare and Medicaid programs on their 50th anniversary today. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Social Security Amendments that created Medicare and Medicaid on July 30, 1965, and the two programs provide health insurance to nearly one out of every three Americans today, equalling more than 100 million Americans.

Medicare and Medicaid provide health care coverage for Americans ages 65 and older, low-income adults, children and pregnant women, and people with disabilities. During the last fifty years, the programs have evolved to include coverage for essential cancer screening and treatments, including radiation oncology care in hospitals and community-based clinics. While radiation therapy services represent a relatively small part of total Medicare spending, approximately 0.5 percent (\$3 billion) of Medicare’s \$600 billion budget, taxpayers receive tremendous value from radiation therapy’s ability to cure cancer and to reduce pain. Advances in radiation therapy and access to treatments allows many seniors to get their cancer treated effectively, while maintaining their work and lifestyles.

“Medicare has been instrumental in ensuring that our nation’s seniors have access to quality and affordable health care, including coverage for critical cancer screenings and treatments, such as radiation therapy, that have saved countless lives,” said Bruce G. Haffty, MD, FASTRO, chair of ASTRO’s Board of Directors. “We have made significant progress in our fight against cancer in the

last five decades—with an estimated 14.5 million cancer survivors alive today thanks in large part to the coverage of care that Medicare provides.

“We urge policymakers to ensure that Medicare continues to fulfill its solemn pledge to seniors by protecting access to high quality radiation oncology care for patients with cancer. ASTRO is eager to continue working with the Medicare program and Congress to safeguard the necessary continued support to maintain access to community-based cancer care and to develop alternative payment models that strengthen Medicare for the next 50 years and beyond,” concluded Haffty.

ABOUT ASTRO

ASTRO is the premier radiation oncology society in the world, with more than 10,000 members who are physicians, nurses, biologists, physicists, radiation therapists, dosimetrists and other health care professionals that specialize in treating patients with radiation therapies. As the leading organization in radiation oncology, the Society is dedicated to improving patient care through professional education and training, support for clinical practice and health policy standards, advancement of science and research, and advocacy. ASTRO publishes three medical journals, International Journal of Radiation Oncology • Biology • Physics (www.redjournal.org), Practical Radiation Oncology (www.practicalradonc.org) and Advances in Radiation Oncology; developed and maintains an extensive patient website, www.rtanswers.org; and created the Radiation Oncology Institute (www.roinstitute.org), a non-profit foundation to support research and education efforts around the world that enhance and confirm the critical role of radiation therapy in improving cancer treatment. To learn more about ASTRO, visit www.astro.org.

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AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY

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