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ASTRO commends Medicare's decision to cover annual, low-dose CT screening for high-risk lung cancer patients ages 55 to 74

Fairfax, Va., November 14, 2014 – The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) praises the November 11, 2014, decision by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide coverage for annual lung cancer screening via low-dose CT screening for those at highest-risk for lung cancer.

The Proposed Decision Memo for Screening for Lung Cancer with Low Dose Computed Tomography (LDCT) (CAG-00439N) confirms that there is sufficient evidence to warrant annual lung cancer screening for patients most at-risk for developing lung cancer. The Memo details the patient criteria for eligibility as follows: aged 55 to 74; asymptomatic (no signs or symptoms of lung disease); a smoking history of at least 30 pack-years (one pack-year = smoking one pack per day for one year; 1 pack = 20 cigarettes); a current smoker or someone who has quit smoking within the last 15 years. CMS is accepting comments on the rule until December 10, 2014, and an effective date is expected in the final coverage decision.

“ASTRO is pleased that CMS has weighed the evidence and decided in favor of annual screening for patients at highest risk for lung cancer, potentially reducing their lung cancer mortality by nearly 20 percent,” said ASTRO Chair Bruce G. Haffty, MD, FASTRO. “Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women in the United States, causing the death of more than 160,000 people each year, surpassing the number of deaths from breast, colon and prostate cancers combined. Data also indicate that nearly 60 percent of all new lung cancer diagnoses are among those who have never smoked or who have already quit smoking. With this highly effective, annual screening in place, we will be able to diagnose patients earlier when

treatment can be most successful, which will save thousands of lives.”

CMS’s decision follows the United States Preventive Task Force’s (USPSTF’s) December 2013 recommendation that LDCT is a Grade B screening, and which reviewed the results of four randomized clinical trials, including the National Cancer Institute’s National Lung Screening Trial, which included more than 50,000 asymptomatic adults aged 55 to 75 who had at least a 30 pack-year history and found a 16 percent reduction in lung cancer mortality for those who received annual screening and thus, earlier treatment.

ABOUT ASTRO

ASTRO is the premier radiation oncology society in the world, with nearly 11,000 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 two medical journals, International Journal of Radiation Oncology • Biology • Physics (www.redjournal.org) and Practical Radiation Oncology (www.practicalradonc.org); 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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