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### DOCTOR IS HONoured FOR WORK ON CANCER

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A Bristol doctor has followed in the footsteps of Nobel Prize holders by winning a top award for his radiology work.

Dr Alan McKenzie, who is United Bristol Healthcare Trust's (UBHT) director of medical physics and bioengineering, received an award from the British Institute of Radiology.

He received the Silvanus Thompson Medal for his work helping to improve the accuracy of radiotherapy, which in the past has also been presented to Lord Rutherford, who split the atom, and MRI scanner pioneer Sir Peter Mansfield and Sir Geoffrey Hounsfield, who developed the CT scanner, who went on to win Nobel prizes.

Dr McKenzie has been working to improve the location and treating of cancer, using radiation - known as radiotherapy - for 10 years.

About half of people with cancer have now used this method as part of their treatment.

It works by destroying the cancer cells in the treated area. Although normal cells are also destroyed by radiation, they are better at repairing themselves than the cancer cells.

It can be given outside the body using x-rays, or from within the body by placing radioactive material in or close to the area being treated.

Dr McKenzie has been looking to cover the tumour with a safety margin of radiation large enough to allow for minor movement over a course of treatment, but not so large that it risks damaging neighbouring healthy organs.

He was approached in November by judges of the award and gave a lecture to 100 people at the British Institute of Radiology in London in December. His department looks at applying physics and engineering to all areas of healthcare science.

As well as improving cancer treatment, the department's work includes developing the use of MRI scanners; research into the dangers that chemicals in the environment pose to unborn babies and improving ways of seeing into the body using low doses of radioactive medicine.

The department is also responsible for the radiation safety of all x-ray equipment and radioactive medicines at UBHT

Dr McKenzie said: "From the point of view of the trust, the award reflects well on Bristol Haematology and Oncology Centre.

"It shows that it's a good place to do cutting edge research and development. The whole team of doctors, radiographers, physicists and technologists in the oncology centre are involved in keeping Bristol at the forefront of radiotherapy in this country."

Dr McKenzie's work was recently given an extra boost when the Friends of Bristol Oncology Centre bought a state-of-the-art imaging system for £500,000. This has allowed even more accurate imaging needed for certain patients.

Dr McKenzie came to Bristol in 1990 to work at the oncology centre and is now responsible for 10 different areas of medical physics and bioengineering across the trust.

Throughout that time, he has retained an interest in cancer, and has chaired national and international working groups developing improvements in treating cancer with radiotherapy.

He is currently working with government cancer czar Professor Mike Richards on the future of radiotherapy in the UK.

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