

London, UK, August 2009.

The British Institute of Radiology and the recent statement from the Department of Health on proton radiotherapy

The British Institute of Radiology welcomes the recent statement from the Department of Health on proton radiotherapy¹. This is a very important decision for cancer patients and for British radiotherapy, and marks an important step in the promise of the Cancer Reform Strategy to deliver world class cancer treatment to patients under the care of the National Health Service.

Under the NHS, proton radiotherapy will be offered to the relatively small number of radiotherapy patients who will benefit the most from this advanced form of treatment. Since there are likely to be only a small number of proton treatment centres, development of these will involve substantial changes to patterns of treatment for some patients, most notably for some paediatric cancers where advantages in terms of reduced long-term treatment-related toxicity are significant.

It is important to note that for the majority of radiotherapy patients, advanced x-ray techniques such as conformal radiation therapy and intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) are able to offer excellent clinical outcomes and minimal treatment-related toxicity. The announcement on proton radiotherapy must not deflect efforts to improve access to IMRT for NHS patients.

Following the success of the BIR President's Conference earlier this year on proton radiotherapy, the BIR intends to organise a series of one-day scientific meetings over the next few years to ensure that the British radiotherapy workforce has access to the latest information on this important subject.

Reference

1. The recent statement is available on:
<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/clientmicrosite/Content/Detail.aspx?ClientId=46&NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=405928&SubjectId=36>

Words: 257

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Notes to Editors:

The British Institute of Radiology (BIR) is an independent member-based charity bringing together all the professions in radiology and allied medical and scientific disciplines to share knowledge and educate the public, thereby improving prevention and detection of disease and management and treatment of patients. The BIR is the oldest radiological society in the world. The origins of the BIR can be traced back to a first meeting held in 1897 to form "The X-ray Society".

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