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Radiation Oncology Institute offers \$200,000 in grants to support big data research on quality improvement in radiation therapy

FAIRFAX, Va., April 27, 2016 -- The Radiation Oncology Institute (ROI) encourages researchers to apply for competitive grants totaling \$200,000 over two years for projects that leverage the unique opportunities afforded by advances in “big data” analytics in radiation oncology. Letters of intent are due in July, with awards to be announced in December.

“Big data approaches may advance quality improvement in our field by helping identify links between factors such as patient or tumor characteristics and outcomes, ranging from positive treatment responses to dosimetric uncertainties or outright errors,” said ROI President Deborah A. Kuban, MD, FASTRO. “These grants are designed to support innovative research with the potential for real-world impact on patient care.”

Eligible projects will focus on improving quality in radiation therapy (RT) by impacting any aspect of the radiation oncology process that could benefit from a big data approach, with preference for proposals that address the highest impact research questions for the field, inform policy development and/or enhance outcomes in cancer treatment.

Special consideration will be given to proposals with an emphasis on identifying and analyzing data sources from the multiple sectors that provide care for patients receiving RT, with the goal of developing measures of quality assurance and quality improvement that span a variety of care providers. To this end, applicant teams that include a combination of physicists, dosimetrists, doctors, nurses, allied medical personnel and/or other employees are highly encouraged.

Sample projects illustrated in the RFP include big data analyses of the measures most important to cancer patients receiving radiation therapy (RT), such as toxicities and patient satisfaction, and large-scale

examinations of patient records to determine, for example, potential benefactors of more active symptom management approaches or increased image guidance. Projects must draw on existing datasets, such as CMS Medicare databases, rather than use the funding to create or develop new registries or datasets.

Applicants must submit a letter of intent by July 8, 2016 and a full project proposal by September 16, 2016 for a research project to be completed by December 2018. Awards will be announced in December 2016, following peer review and scoring of completed proposals. Detailed information about the Request for Proposal (RFP), the grant application process and evaluation criteria is available at www.roinstitute.org.

Eligible applicants include individuals from institutions and organizations in the radiation oncology community who have completed post-doctoral training and are not enrolled in residency or fellowship programs; research consortia; and vendors or individuals from institutions or organizations with expertise and qualifications needed for specified research.

Each completed proposal will be judged by a minimum of five reviewers. Criteria for evaluation of scientific and technical merit include overall impact, significance, approach, innovation, investigators, research environment, and budget.

All ROI research initiatives stem from findings of the National Radiation Oncology Research Needs Assessment conducted during the ROI's formative years to determine the most pressing areas of need for research in radiation oncology. The ROI National Research Agenda underscores the importance of research to demonstrate the significant medical expertise and value that radiation oncology brings to cancer care throughout the world and includes six priorities: communication strategies to improve understanding of RT; safety and quality indicators for treatment; development of a radiation oncology registry; best practices for managing radiation toxicity; comparative effectiveness research in radiation oncology; and assessment of the value of RT relative to other cancer treatment modalities.

ABOUT ROI

The Radiation Oncology Institute (ROI) is a nonprofit, 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 heighten the critical role of radiation therapy in the treatment of cancer. 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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