

THE RADIATION THERAPY TREATMENT TEAM



ASTRO

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY

THE RADIATION THERAPY TREATMENT TEAM

contents

RADIATION ONCOLOGISTS	2
RADIATION THERAPISTS	3
RADIATION ONCOLOGY NURSES/NURSE PRACTITIONERS AND MEDICAL ASSISTANTS	4
MEDICAL PHYSICISTS	5
DOSIMETRISTS	6
SOCIAL WORKERS	7
PATIENT NAVIGATOR	7
NUTRITIONISTS/DIETITIANS	7
PHYSICAL THERAPISTS	8
DENTISTS	8
RECEPTION/FRONT DESK STAFF	8





There are three different types of oncologists: radiation, medical and surgical. Each type of oncologist has unique training and expertise, which complement the knowledge of the other types.

- Radiation oncologists are experts in the use of radiation to treat cancer and some benign conditions as well.
- Surgical oncologists are experts in the use of surgery to treat cancer.
- Medical oncologists are experts in the use of medications to treat cancer.

RADIATION ONCOLOGISTS

Radiation oncologists are the doctors who will oversee your radiation therapy treatments. These doctors work with the other members of the radiation therapy team to develop your treatment plan and ensure that each treatment is given safely and accurately. Your radiation oncologist will also monitor your progress and adjust the treatment as necessary to make sure the radiation is hitting its target while minimizing side effects.



Before, during and after your radiation therapy treatments, your radiation oncologist works closely with other cancer doctors such as medical oncologists and surgeons to maximize the effectiveness of your radiation treatment plan.

- Radiation oncologists are the only doctors with the expertise and training to safely prescribe and oversee radiation therapy treatments as well as manage side effects.
- In addition to college and medical school, five years of additional training through residency are required for radiation oncologists. Your team may include these radiation oncologists in training.

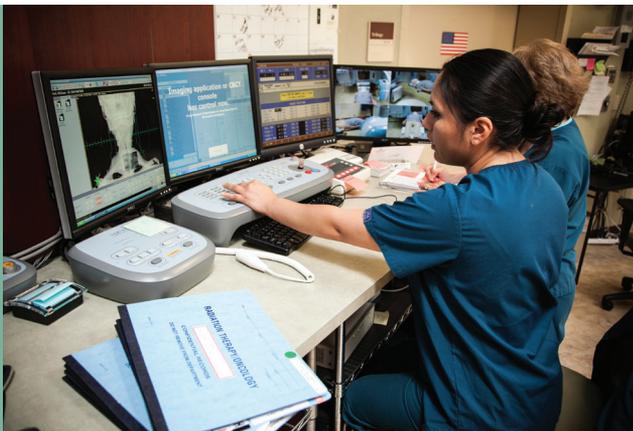
- Radiation oncologists are board certified through the American Board of Radiology.
- You will meet with your radiation oncologist for your initial consultation, your planning session, and weekly visits.

RADIATION THERAPISTS

Radiation therapists work under the supervision of the radiation oncologist to administer your daily radiation treatment.

Radiation therapists will also help to set up your initial planning session with specific treatment devices for your treatment.

- Radiation therapists go through a two- to four-year educational program following high school or college. By passing a special examination, radiation therapists may be certified by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists.
- You will spend time with the radiation therapy team at each of your treatments.
- For more information on radiation therapists, contact the American Society of Radiologic Technologists at www.asrt.org.



RADIATION ONCOLOGY NURSES/NURSE PRACTITIONERS AND MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

Radiation oncology nurses and medical assistants work with every member of the treatment team to care for you and assist your family before, during and after treatment. They help explain the possible side effects that you may experience and describe how you can manage them.

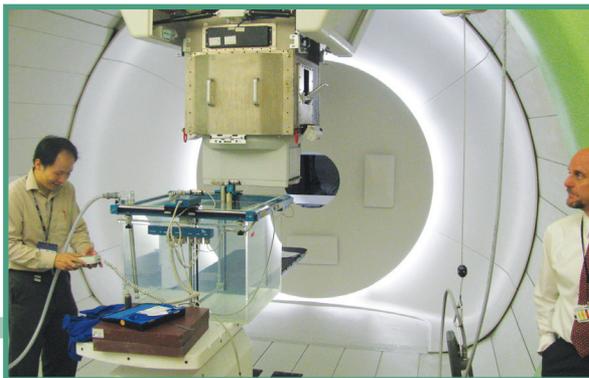
- Nurses and medical assistants assess how you are doing throughout treatment and can help you cope with the changes you are experiencing.
- Many registered nurses in radiation therapy have earned additional certification in the specialty of oncology nursing, and these nurses hold the OCN (Oncology Certified Nurse) designation.
- Advanced practice nurses, including clinical nurse specialists and nurse practitioners, have completed a master's degree program.



MEDICAL PHYSICISTS

Qualified medical physicists work directly with the radiation oncologist during treatment planning and delivery. They oversee the work of the dosimetrists and help ensure that complex treatments are properly tailored for each patient.

- Medical physicists are responsible for developing and directing quality control programs, and ensuring safe and precise treatment deliveries.
- The medical physicist ensures equipment remains safe and correctly calibrated, and that radiation dose determinations are accurate. They ensure equipment and procedures are in compliance with state and federal regulations and up to date standards.
- Physicists can be involved in research and development to improve radiation oncology techniques.
- Medical physicists have a graduate degree in medical physics, physics or engineering. To be eligible for board certification by the American Board of Radiology, they must also complete a multi-year residency in an accredited residency program.
- For more information on medical physicists, contact the American Association of Physicists in Medicine at www.aapm.org.



DOSIMETRISTS

Dosimetrists work with the radiation oncologist and medical physicist to develop an optimized treatment plan that best destroys the tumor while sparing healthy tissue. They calculate the dose of radiation to make sure the tumor gets the prescribed amount. These professionals require advanced training to create expert radiation plans.

- Many dosimetrists have experience as radiation therapists and then, with intensive training, become dosimetrists. Others are graduates of one- to two-year dosimetry training programs.
- Dosimetrists are certified by the Medical Dosimetrist Certification Board.
- Contact the American Association of Medical Dosimetrists at www.medicaldosimetry.org for more information.



SOCIAL WORKERS

Social workers are available to provide a variety of supportive services to you and your family. They can provide counseling to help you and your family cope with the diagnosis of cancer and with your treatment. Along with other members of the team, they are frequently involved in support groups. They may also help arrange for home health care, transportation, financial support, emotional support and other services.

PATIENT NAVIGATOR

A patient navigator is a social worker, nurse or other knowledgeable individual who can assist you in finding your way within the complex health care system. They are often the first person with whom you will be in contact after your initial cancer diagnosis. Patient navigators know who to call and where to go so your care may be most efficiently provided.

NUTRITIONISTS/DIETITIANS

Nutritionists or dietitians work with you to help you maintain a healthy diet during treatment. They will help you modify your diet if the side effects of treatment are affecting your appetite, help you identify what you should eat, and can provide recipes, menu suggestions and information on ready-to-use nutritional supplements. They also can address dietary issues and current developments that may affect cancer treatment outcomes.



PHYSICAL THERAPISTS

Physical therapists use therapeutic exercises to ensure that your body functions properly before, during and/or after

treatment. These exercises are used to help manage side effects, alleviate pain and keep you healthy.

DENTISTS

Dentists may be involved in your care if you are receiving radiation for cancers of the mouth, throat or neck. Dentists may recommend that you have preventive dental work prior to radiation, and they will also help you manage the oral effects of cancer therapy such as dry mouth or tooth or denture problems.

RECEPTION/FRONT DESK STAFF

Members of the reception/front desk staff are an important part of the team. They will greet you daily when you check in for your treatments and appointments. They may also help schedule your consultations and follow up appointments as well as coordinate your treatment times.



I Have Cancer. Now What?

Receiving a diagnosis of cancer can be frightening and confusing. [RTAnswers.org](https://www.rtananswers.org) provides detailed information and resources for cancer patients and their caregivers, including:

- Treatment information by disease site.
- Videos walking you through the radiation therapy treatment process.
- Stories from patients and caregivers sharing their experiences from diagnosis and treatment to survivorship.
- A "Find a Radiation Oncologist" portal where you can search by city, state and disease site specialty.

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY

(ASTRO) is the largest radiation oncology society in the world, with more than 10,000 members who specialize in treating patients with radiation therapies. As the leading organization in radiation oncology, biology and physics, ASTRO's mission is to advance the specialty of radiation oncology through promotion of equitable, high-quality care for people with cancer, cultivating and educating a diverse workforce, fostering research and innovation, and leading policy development and advocacy.

Visit www.astro.org for more information.



AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY

251 18th Street South, 8th Floor, Arlington, VA 22202

rtanswers@astro.org

www.astro.org • www.rtanswers.org

ASTRO

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY

Patient education resources are supported in part by ASTRO's Partners in Patient Education (PiPE). For more information about PiPE, visit www.astro.org/PiPE.