

LEADING HEALTHCARE LAWMAKER ATTENDS IHE-RO



Top: Rep. Green is escorted on his tour of M.D. Anderson by Michael Gillian, Ph.D., and Patricia Eifel, M.D., FASTRO.

Bottom: Rep. Green learns about intergrating radiation therapy equipment at the IHE-RO Connectathon.

REP. GENE GREEN (D-TEXAS) attended the Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise-Radiation Oncology (IHE-RO) Connectathon August 4, 2008, at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Proton Therapy Center in Houston.

ASTRO invited Rep. Green, whose congressional district neighbors the cancer center, to observe the connectathon and to learn about the ASTRO-led partnership to integrate radiation therapy equipment and patient health information systems. He serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, a key panel with jurisdiction over healthcare issues, and is a vocal advocate for health information technology, patient safety and cancer research. Rep. Green spent more than an hour touring the center and learning about the benefits of the IHE-RO effort.

“We are so pleased that Rep. Green took time from his busy schedule to visit

with us,” said ASTRO Chair Patricia Eifel, M.D., FASTRO, who escorted Rep. Green on his visit. “I think he gained a deeper appreciation of how we treat and cure cancer, as well as ASTRO’s leadership role in bringing together vendors to make our care more efficient and safer for our patients.”

ASTRO staff has worked closely with Rep. Green’s office on various legislative initiatives, including the Medicare bill that averted the 10.6 percent physician payment cut in July. Following the Houston visit, Green’s office contacted ASTRO staff to say that the representative agreed to sign on as an early co-sponsor of new ASTRO-backed legislation to create a National Cancer Fund to supplement existing cancer research funding (*see related story on Page 7*).

Dave Adler, Assistant Director of Government Relations, davea@astro.org

BE A PART OF INTEGRATING THE HEALTHCARE ENTERPRISE – RADIATION ONCOLOGY

SLOWLY BUT SURELY THE IMPORTANCE of IHE-RO has been surfacing in the radiation oncology community. Realizing the importance of IHE-RO for radiation oncologists, ASTRO has been supporting the IHE-RO initiative of seamless connectivity since 2004. The IHE-RO members, including physicians, physicists and different vendors, are working hard to develop profiles to improve your workflow and patient care. Eventually, IHE-RO will help you to select products based on features, productivity and cost efficiency and it will help vendors to focus on improving patient care instead of interface and connectivity problems.

In 2007, IHE-RO tested and demonstrated its first profile showing connectivity for basic information exchange in the radiation oncology treatment planning process. This year, IHE-RO tested the compatibility of manufacturers involved in using multi-modality imaging as part of the treatment planning process during the connectathon held earlier this year in Houston. Siemens, CMS-Elekta-IMPAC, Nucletron, TomoTherapy, Philips, BrainLAB, MIMVista and Varian participated in this second profile testing. All eight vendors passed the testing of seamless connectivity during the connectathon. The vendors who passed the connectivity testing during the connectathon were then invited to the 2008 public demonstration at ASTRO’s 50th Annual Meeting in Boston.



The IHE-RO Booth at ASTRO's Annual Meeting.

If you had a chance to go to the Exhibit Hall during the meeting you might have seen our booth with logos from different vendors and a statement saying “Plug and Play – Radiation Oncology”.

IHE-RO is proud of its achievements and it looks forward to bringing you new profiles each year. IHE-RO is developing profiles for managing the treatment delivery process and more advanced information exchange for 2009. IHE-RO strongly believes that one day you will be able to buy any equipment from any vendor and will be able to plug and play without any interconnectivity issues.

For an uninterrupted workflow and excellent patient care, the IHE-RO initiative cannot be underestimated. Therefore, we request you to participate in the IHE-RO initiative in the following ways:

- Participate in the IHE-RO Planning and Technical Committee.
- Participate in the process of IHE-RO in identifying interconnectivity problems and defining standards.
- Encourage your vendors to participate in IHE-RO.
- Be an evangelist for IHE-RO in the community.
- Use IHE-RO integration profiles in your proposal requests for all your new products.

For ongoing activities in IHE-RO, please visit <http://wiki.ihe.net>.

*Sumita Ranjitkar, Research Health Analyst,
sunitar@astro.org*

NEW BILL WOULD CREATE NATIONAL CANCER FUND

THE NATIONAL CANCER FUND ACT OF 2008 (HR 6791) was introduced prior to the August recess by Reps. Brian Higgins (D-N.Y.) and Steve Israel (D-N.Y.), co-chairs of the House Cancer Caucus. The bill, supported by ASTRO, is critical legislation that would reverse declining trends in federal cancer research funding and accelerate progress in preventing and controlling cancer and currently has 12 bipartisan cosponsors.

The legislation would supplement existing federally funded cancer research and control programs with the goal of reducing cancer mortality to zero, benefiting cancer patients, ensuring a high quality of life for cancer survivors, and providing for palliative and end-of-life care. It would establish a National Cancer Fund, to be funded by a tobacco tax increase, including cigarettes, cigars, smokeless and pipe tobacco that would bring the federal tax to \$1 per pack and raise about \$7 billion per year in new money for the fight against cancer. Funds would be spent in the following areas:

- Cancer research.
- Expansion of NIH research grants.
- Study of long-term effects of cancer treatment and access to follow-up care.
- Expansion of early-detection and treatment programs for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer.
- Access to healthcare for underserved and underinsured populations.
- Increased access to clinical trials.
- Implementation of nationwide tobacco cessation.
- Development of biomarkers and other tools to expedite delivery of effective treatment.

The bill also directs the President's Cancer Panel to convene a group of individuals with expertise in public and private finance, capital investment, public health, research and cancer to examine the feasibility of alternative sources of funding to support the National Cancer Fund and report its findings to Congress within one year of enactment.

ASTRO worked closely with its partners in the One Voice Against Cancer coalition in developing this bill and quickly announced its support for the legislation. The bill is not expected to pass this year, but supporters hope it will spark much-needed debate about reigniting the federal cancer research investment starting in 2009.

According to an April 2008 Lake Research Partners nationwide poll, 69 percent of Americans believe cancer funding should be increased and 87 percent support creation of a special cancer fund to pay for it. In addition, 73 percent supported an increase in the federal tobacco tax to raise the needed funds.

Please visit ASTRO's online grassroots center at <http://capwiz.com/astro/home/>, enter your ZIP code and tell your representative to co-sponsor this legislation.

Dave Adler, Assistant Director of Government Relations, davea@astro.org