

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### Radiotherapy services in England: good progress but still work to do

A survey by The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) has confirmed that there are marked geographical variations in patients' access to radiotherapy, and also important differences in treatment capacity, across England. The survey is presented by Dr Michael Williams, in a paper appearing in the July 2009 edition of the journal *Clinical Oncology*.

Radiotherapy is a key component of high quality modern cancer care, playing a vital role in curative and also in palliative treatments. This survey highlights the crucial relationship between available treatment capacity and patterns of practice with reduced access, and numbers of treatments per patient (fractionation) where that capacity is inadequate.

Dr Jane Barrett, Dean of the RCR's Faculty of Oncology, said, "It has been known for some time that socially deprived patients have worse outcomes for a range of cancers. This research shows that access to radiotherapy varies across the UK and is affected by deprivation. It is likely that deprived patients present later with more advanced tumours which are more difficult to treat. Further research will be necessary to establish ways of improving treatment and outcomes for such patients.

"English Strategic Health Authorities and health authorities in the devolved UK countries should consider the findings of this survey in their ongoing reviews of radiotherapy services, and we will continue to work with health services throughout the UK to ensure that new resources for workforce and treatment capacity are targeted on areas where there is inadequate access/service."

#### Notes to Editors

1. For further details, please contact Dan Garbutt, Communications Officer at the Royal College of Radiologists, on 020 7299 1138 or [dan\\_garbutt@rcr.ac.uk](mailto:dan_garbutt@rcr.ac.uk)

2. The paper, *Geographical variation in radiotherapy services across the UK in 2007 and the impact of deprivation*, appears in the July 2009 edition of the Royal College of Radiologists' journal *Clinical Oncology*; a copy of the paper can be provided on request. *Clinical Oncology* is the scientific journal of the Royal College of Radiologist's Faculty of Clinical Oncology, published ten times a year; more information is available at <http://www.rcr.ac.uk/content.aspx?PageID=153>.

2. The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) has approximately 7800 members and Fellows worldwide, representing the disciplines of clinical oncology and clinical radiology. All members and Fellows of the College are registered medical or dental practitioners.

3. The Cancer Reform Strategy was published in 2007, the same year as this survey, with improvement of radiotherapy services as one of its key priorities, and new radiotherapy centres have since been commissioned in some key places. Radiotherapy as a treatment is undergoing very rapid technological advances, notably Intensity Modulated and Image Guided Radiotherapy (IMRT and IGRT), that enable higher cure rates with fewer side effects. These higher quality treatment techniques should be delivered at the same time as the introduction of greater treatment capacity.