Choosing the right accreditation program is an important decision, and we are pleased to assist you as you consider ASTRO’s APEx - Accreditation Program for Excellence®.

APEx provides a complete review of your radiation oncology program, focusing on the entire team to ensure your patients receive the highest quality of care. Assessment areas include patient care/safety, quality management, team training, treatment planning/delivery, equipment and data management. As a comprehensive program, APEx evaluates several areas that other accreditation programs may not assess, including:

**Culture of Safety:** Errors occur, but in a practice with a strong culture of safety, radiation oncology staff can use the errors as a learning opportunity. APEx supports an open, non-punitive work environment with shared values, beliefs and norms to build a learning health care system. Catching near misses before events reach the patient is the goal, but tracking near misses and patient events provides knowledge to mitigate future incidents. APEx requires:

- A process for reporting all incidents, including near misses and patient events focused on preventing future occurrences.
- Developing a non-punitive culture that empowers staff and patients to speak up and ask questions.
- A process for staff and patients to submit incidents anonymously.
- Appointment of radiation oncology leaders to oversee the submission, review and education on events and safety trends, including management of interdisciplinary radiation oncology safety meetings to provide ongoing education.
- Reporting to a patient safety organization (PSO), like Clarity which supports ASTRO's RO-ILS®, allowing your practice to see trends in patient events locally and nationwide.

**Clinical Safety:** The safety of patients is the responsibility of every team member. APEx requires systems that support safe staffing levels, infection control and caring for patients in an emergency setting:

- Providing safe staffing plans for absences and supervising non-board-certified team members assisting in the treatment procedure (e.g., students, medical physicist assistants, etc.).
- Being equipped to respond to equipment failure during treatment and responding to patient falls, cardiac events, adverse drug reactions.
- Facilitating transfers to emergency care during and after hours.
- Cleaning radiation oncology-specific equipment (e.g., tables, custom and non-custom devices)
**Clinical Communication:** Communication is a vital aspect of radiation therapy. To support the full radiation oncology team, APEx requires policies and procedures on:

- The documented communication used to inform the team when equipment is ready to return to service or data deviates from expected outcomes.
- Transmitting initial consultation and end-of-treatment notes to other providers and ensuring timely transfer of radiation therapy records upon request.
- Verifying that the proper image set is transferred from simulation to the treatment planning system and ensuring accurate recording of patient information when using more than one information system.

**Information Systems and Support:** Radiation therapy is a technologically driven field, and the systems require the same amount of QA as any other aspect. APEx requires policies on:

- Using individualized sign-ins with permissions based on job functions, plus implementing information system safety options (e.g., bolus acknowledgment, timestamp change requests, password-protected approvals, etc.).
- Ensuring staff are trained on system upgrades and responding to requests for additional training to promote optimal utilization.

**Patient Education and Referrals:** Patient education should encompass more than just treatment options, intent and the treatment process. APEx requires policies for:

- Educating patients on the potential financial impact of treatment.
- Educating patients regularly with oral and written options in languages appropriate for your community.
- Referring patients to specialists outside of radiation oncology (e.g., speech therapy, pain management, etc.).
- Accepting and addressing patients’ grievances outside of satisfaction surveys.

**Peer Review:** Collaborating and sharing knowledge with colleagues within your discipline provides a learning opportunity that can improve the quality of care at your practice. APEx supports continued learning at all levels through:

- Maintaining *intradisciplinary* peer review processes to help team members learn discipline-specific information from their colleagues.
- Reviewing profession-specific standard operating procedures, feedback on tasks within the clinic and identifying additional education opportunities.

**What’s Next:**

- Request a [peer-to-peer conversation](#) with a radiation oncology professional who has switched to APEx.
- Schedule a [one-on-one individualized meeting](#) between your team and ASTRO staff.