



**AMERICAN SOCIETY
FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY**

251 18th St. South, 8th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202

Main: 703.502.1550

Fax: 703.502.7852

www.astro.org · www.rtanswers.org

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October 16, 2024

The Honorable Mike Kelly
U.S. House of Representatives
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kelly,

On behalf of the 10,000 members of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), we write to express our strong support for the resolution designating September 30 as “Rare Cancer Day.” This resolution is crucial to highlight the unique challenges faced by people diagnosed with rare cancers and to raise awareness about the need for improved early detection and treatment options.

ASTRO medical professionals practice at hospitals and cancer treatment centers across the United States, and together treat more than one million people with cancer each year. These teams include radiation oncologists, medical physicists, medical dosimetrists, radiation therapists, oncology nurses, nutritionists, and social workers. We join other organizations deeply concerned about the impact of rare cancers and fully support your efforts and stand ready to assist in advancing this resolution in Congress. Our members are dedicated to our patients facing these challenging diseases.

Currently, an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 people in the United States are living with a rare cancer, which accounts for about 20% of all cancer diagnoses. These cancers often go unrecognized due to their unusual symptoms, leading to delayed diagnoses and poorer outcomes. The five-year survival rates for rare cancer patients are significantly lower than those for more common cancers, and treatment options can be limited. These facts underscore the necessity of advancing research and fostering collaboration within the medical community to address the specific needs of rare cancer patients.

Radiation therapy is used for rare cancer treatments, particularly when the cancer is found to be unresectable and locally advanced, to ensure precise targeting of the tumor and minimize the radiation exposure to the surrounding healthy tissues. Advances in radiation therapy, including stereotactic body radiation therapy, stereotactic radiosurgery, proton therapy, image-guided radiation therapy (IGRT), proton therapy, and selective internal radiation therapy (SIRT), are just the beginning of more effective radiation treatments for many rare cancers.

We applaud your leadership in championing the Rare Cancer Day resolution. By increasing awareness and promoting early diagnosis, this initiative can play a crucial role in improving survival rates and enhancing the quality of life for those affected by rare cancers. Moreover, it encourages essential partnerships between healthcare providers, researchers, and policymakers to drive the development of more effective treatments.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to this important cause in Congress, including co-chairing the House Cancer Caucus. ASTRO is proud to support your efforts to designate September 30, 2024, as Rare Cancer Day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard Sandler". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Howard Sandler, MD, MS, FASTRO
Chair, ASTRO Board of Directors