

New survey shows 36-percent increase in pediatric patients treated with proton therapy

May 24 2015

Results from a new nationwide survey announced today indicate a steady increase in the number of pediatric patients who are being treated with proton radiation therapy for cancerous and non-cancerous tumors.

The research, led by Andrew L. Chang, M.D., medical director of pediatrics with the Scripps Proton Therapy Center, was presented during the 54th annual Particle Therapy Co-Operative Group (PTCOG) Conference in San Diego, which runs through May 23.

Based on a survey of all [proton therapy](#) centers in the United States, the number of pediatric patients treated with proton radiation therapy has grown to 722 in 2013, a 36-percent increase from the 465 patients treated in 2010.

"Children are particularly vulnerable to the late side effects of radiation exposure to normal tissue, including treatment-related chronic disease and secondary cancers," said Dr. Chang. "So we view this as a positive sign that more children are gaining access to this more precise form of [radiation](#) delivery."

Of [pediatric patients](#) treated with proton therapy in 2013, 56 percent were younger than age 10 and 26 percent were enrolled on multi-institutional registry studies. The most common tumor diagnoses treated included ependymoma (brain), medulloblastoma (brain and spinal cord) and low-grade glioma (brain).

A recent industry report showed that there are currently 16 proton therapy centers operating in the United States and the number is forecast to grow to 27 by 2017. The Mayo Clinic is expected to begin treating patients at its first proton center in June 2015.

Proton therapy is a form of [external beam radiation](#) that treats tumors with heavy charged particles, which can be placed precisely at the site of the tumor. Scripps Proton Therapy Center, which opened in February 2014, is the nation's only center to exclusively offer the most precise proton delivery technology available, pencil-beam scanning. Scripps Health provides the center's clinical management services and Scripps Clinic oversees the medical services. Advanced Particle Therapy is the center's developer and owner. Scripps has established an affiliation with Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego for pediatric care at the center.

Provided by Scripps Health

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