Dr. Hani Al-Halabi Awarded $75,000 2013 CARO-Elekta Research Fellowship for Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy Lung Cancer Study

An additional $37,500 research fellowship awarded to Dr. Alex Louie for study on optimizing patient selection for stereotactic radiotherapy of lung cancer

ATLANTA, April 25th – Hani Al-Halabi, B.Sc., in microbiology and immunology, M.Sc. in experimental medicine, M.D. C.M., who completed his Radiation Oncology residency at McGill University in Montreal and is currently a first year radiation oncology fellow at Harvard Medical School, is awarded the $75,000, 12-month 2013 CARO-Elekta Research Fellowship for his proposed study, ***"Integrating stereotactic body radiation therapy [SBRT] into targeted therapies for EGFR-mutant non-small cell lung cancer,"*** to be carried out at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Department of Radiation Oncology, Harvard Medical School (supervisor Dr Henning Willers).

Metastases are the leading cause of cancer death in patients with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). These patients are treated with cytotoxic and targeted systemic therapies, which rarely achieve long-term disease control, leaving patients with a median survival of about one year. Most patients develop disease progression in either the primary tumor or original sites of mets, suggesting that metastasis-directed therapies are needed.

SBRT has enabled the delivery of one or a few extracranial doses of highly focused radiation to primary tumors or mets. Studies have shown that SBRT can achieve high rates of treated-metastasis control in patients with limited metastatic burden. Dr. Al-Halabi's research will help identify the ideal subset of metastatic NSCLC patients who are most likely to achieve prolonged disease-free survival through the integration of SBRT into systemic therapies.

EGFR mutant cancers represent a unique subset of NSCLC that responds well to EGFR targeted therapies.

"My hypothesis is that adjuvant metastasis-directed SBRT following targeted therapy will prolong disease-free survival in metastatic EGFR mutant NSCLC patients," Dr. Al-Halabi says. "The prospective adjuvant SBRT trial will involve patients with low burden, stable residual metastatic disease following targeted therapy."

Dr. Al-Halabi's research aims at identifying factors that would aid in the proper selection of NSCLC patients who would benefit from metastasis directed SBRT. His research also will assess the feasibility of integrating SBRT into systemic therapies, aiming to establish a role for SBRT in managing metastatic NSCLC.

One-time additional 6-month CARO-Elekta Research Fellowship awarded to Dr. Alex Louie for Recognition of Merit

Alexander Louie, B.Sc., M.D, and final-year radiation oncology resident at Western University In London, Ont, is awarded the $37,500, 6-month 2013 CARO-Elekta Research Fellowship for his proposed study, ***"Optimizing patient selection in stereotactic ablative radiotherapy [SABR] for early non-small cell lung cancer [NSCLC] through comparative effectiveness research,"*** to be carried out at the Vrije University Medical Center, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (supervisor Prof Suresh Senan). In addition to his fellowship in Amsterdam, he will be completing a Master's Degree in Epidemiology at Harvard University.

The advent of SABR, a form of high precision radiotherapy, is among the most significant advances of curative treatment for lung cancer in recent history. To date, however, no randomized studies comparing SABR and conventionally fractionated radiotherapy or surgery have been reported.

"Broadening the scope of the use of SABR in early lung cancer will translate into survival gains and improved quality of life, at a reasonable cost to taxpayers," Dr. Louie says.

"To keep advancements in radiation oncology vital and growing, it is critical that Elekta focuses on the building blocks of these technological innovations, which is basic and clinical research in the cause and treatment of cancer," says Gerry Hogue, Senior Vice President & General Manager, Elekta North America. "Elekta's ongoing funding of CARO's radiation oncology research fellowship is our contribution to ensuring that Canadian investigators and scientists are equipped financially to pursue these fields of inquiry."

About the Canadian Association of Radiation Oncology
Canadian Association of Radiation Oncology (CARO) – Association canadienne de radio-oncologie (ACRO) is a not-for-profit association with the mandate to represent and support its membership nationally and internationally, through the promotion of high standards of patient care in the practice of radiation oncology, support of excellence in professional standards, and the promotion of radiation oncology research and education. CARO is a partner with other disciplines in seeking to improve outcomes for cancer patients, and provides a consultative authority to oncology related agencies, academic institutions, and to the public in all matters pertaining to radiotherapy and oncology in Canada. For further information: www.caro-acro.ca

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