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Prominent experts gather to discuss cancer therapy research in Naperville

WEST CHICAGO, IL- The Northern Illinois Proton Treatment and Research Center (NIPTRC) is sponsoring a three day symposium in Naperville on the recent advances in proton radiation therapy research. Congressman Bill Foster will begin the event by welcoming the group to Illinois on June 22nd. Northern Illinois University is the local host along with MD Anderson and Rice University to bring together renowned physicists, physicians, biologists, and researchers from around the country.

“We believe it is important to bring together the many great minds in this field to a forum where innovation and education can flourish,” said NIU Board of Trustees Chair Cherilyn Murer. “Proton therapy is a transformational treatment for cancer and these partnerships are helping to shape its promising future.”

Murer will keynote a dinner at Fermilab on June 23rd and speak about the political environment and its impact on proton therapy, an advanced and highly effective noninvasive form of radiation therapy unavailable in Illinois. Currently, there are only five operational proton centers in the United States. Last year, NIU and NIPTRC received approval to build the sixth.

“NIU’s history of working with researchers from Fermilab and Argonne National Lab gave rise to this important endeavor,” said NIU President John Peters. “Together with experts from around the world, we are developing the most comprehensive, treatment and research-oriented proton center for the people of Illinois and the Midwest.”

NIPTRC broke ground in the DuPage National Technology Park last year. Once completed, the center will provide proton therapy to 1,500 cancer patients every year. Local patients currently have to travel as far away as Loma Linda, California and Boston, Massachusetts to receive treatment. This can prove especially difficult for families and children with cancer.

“A large number of children die every year from cancer in the United States, and proton therapy has proven very effective in treating pediatric patients,” said Dr. Bharat Mittal, M.D., chairman of the Department of Radiation Oncology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. “We are dedicated to helping win this fight by bringing proton therapy to the Chicago region.”

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Dr. Mittal is among those slated to speak at the symposium. He is a part of the Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation that will supply radiation oncologists to NIPTRC and provide proton cancer treatment services. Like the other presenters, Mittal is widely published and has lectured throughout the world.

“This conference symbolizes one of the core missions of NIPTRC to advance the research of protons and the treatment of cancer,” said NIPTRC Executive Director John Lewis. “Speakers from a dozen prestigious institutions will discuss such topics as clinical trials and results, management of second cancer risks, future research, and treating pediatric cancers.”

The three day event will be held on NIU’s Naperville campus at 1120 E. Diehl Road beginning at 8:30am on June 22nd and concluding on the 24th at 5pm. Details are available at www.niptrc.org/conference.html.

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