

# Radiotherapy is 'undervalued' and 'needs greater investment' say experts

November 7 2018

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Radiotherapy is 'undervalued' and 'needs greater investment' according to a new report published today commissioned by the Marie Curie Legacy Campaign—an initiative of the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) and the ESTRO Cancer Foundation (ECF).

'Radiotherapy saves lives—either used alone or in combination with other types of [cancer](#) treatment,' says report author, Yolande Lievens, Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology, Ghent University Hospital, and Past-President of ESTRO. 'Currently, [radiotherapy](#) is recommended as part of treatment for more than 50% of cancer [patients](#), but across Europe, at least a quarter of people who need radiotherapy do not receive it. This is wholly unacceptable and a missed opportunity for cancer patients.'

Entitled Radiotherapy: seizing the opportunity in cancer care, the white paper recommends a five point plan to boost uptake of radiotherapy and calls on all stakeholders—governments and policymakers, healthcare professionals, patients and professional societies, along with national and international research funds—to become 'radiotherapy ambassadors' to help raise awareness of the benefits of radiotherapy and secure its valuable position in comprehensive, optimal cancer care.

The report's authors cite shortages of high-quality equipment, variations in training, insufficient integration of radiotherapy into treatment plans, lack of investment in research, lack of general understanding of

radiotherapy as a cancer treatment and misconceptions regarding the safety of radiotherapy among the important factors contributing to radiotherapy's poor image and underuse.

The report's five key recommendations are:

- Make radiotherapy a central component of [cancer care](#) in policies, planning and budgets
- Achieve recognition of all radiotherapy professions and harmonise education and training standards across Europe
- Invest in research and use of data to continuously improve radiotherapy outcomes for patients and maximise the potential of innovation
- Fully integrate radiotherapy into treatment planning and decision-making
- Help improve general awareness and understanding of radiotherapy to ensure it can achieve its full potential for patient care

In 2018, 4.23 million people received a cancer diagnosis in Europe<sup>3</sup> - and the incidence of cancer is increasing. The demand for radiotherapy is expected to see a 16% increase by 2025.<sup>4,5</sup>

'Radiotherapy appears to be left on the sidelines of national health policy agendas,' says Lydia Makaroff, Director of the European Cancer Patient Coalition. 'Greater investment, improved access and better understanding of radiotherapy—both at a national and international level—is vital. This will ensure that patients get the best possible and most effective care for their particular type of cancer, leading to better outcomes and more lives saved.'

**More information:** [mariecurielegacy.org/](http://mariecurielegacy.org/)

Provided by European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology

Citation: Radiotherapy is 'undervalued' and 'needs greater investment' say experts (2018, November 7) retrieved 6 August 2024 from  
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-11-radiotherapy-undervalued-greater-investment-experts.html>

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