**Presentation title: Targeting Cancer – Linking Rural Communities to Local Cancer Treatment**

**Abstract** (max. 300 words):

The incidence of cancer is steadily rising and 1 in 2 Australians will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85 (1). In 2017, an estimated 134, 180 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in Australia (1). This number is set to rise to 150,000 by 2020 (1).

Radiation therapy (RT) is a safe and effective treatment option. It is estimated that 1 in 2 patients with cancer would benefit from RT at some point during their treatment (2). Over the last decade, technological advances and vigorous clinical trial data has allowed sophistication of treatment planning and delivery, making it possible to target a tumour with increasing accuracy and reduced side effects (2).

Unfortunately, not all patients who might benefit from RT actually receive it. For rural patients, this is an even greater concern where distance to RT centres further limits access to treatment and may necessitate long periods of time away from home. Other factors contributing to underutilisation of RT include patient misconceptions surrounding RT and inadequate exposure of medical students, General Practitioners (GPs) and other specialists to the discipline during training (2). One study indicates that over 90% of GPs have themselves identified that their RT knowledge needed significant improvement (2). Despite research demonstrating clinical equipoise between surgery and RT, some specialists fail to offer radiation therapy to patients as an alternate option (3). This may result in long term decision regret for patients who believe that their outcome would have been better if they decided differently about their management (3).

Rural GPs in particular play a crucial role at every stage in the management of a patient diagnosed with cancer. Many patients are suitable candidates for non-surgical curative management with RT. GPs can directly refer to regional RT centres that are equipped to provide patients with optimal cancer care.

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**References**

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. Cancer in Australia 2017. Cancer series no.101. Cat. no. CAN 100. Canberra: AIHW.
2. Gorayski, Peter, Mark B. Pinkham, and Margot Lehman. "Advances in radiotherapy technology for prostate cancer: What every GP should know." Australian family physician 44.9 (2015): 663
3. Shakespeare, Thomas P., et al. "Long‐term decision regret after post‐prostatectomy image‐guided intensity‐modulated radiotherapy." Journal of medical imaging and radiation oncology 61.1 (2017): 141-145.

*Authors Notes*

*We hope to still be included as a soap box. I thought a soap box would be the best platform to facilitate discussion about the role rural General Practitioners play in providing optimal cancer care for their patients. We will work to ensure the presentation is not too optimistic and not perceived as being biased.*