



Press Release

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Washington Hospital physician takes national honors for using advanced technology to treat brain tumors

Fremont, Calif. – David Larson, MD, PhD, co-medical director of Washington Hospital’s innovative Gamma Knife Program, was awarded the Gold Medal from the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), the organization’s most prestigious award given to only two individuals each year. Dr. Larson received the award for his contributions to the management of brain tumors and the field of radiation oncology.

“It’s truly an honor to have a physician of this caliber on the Hospital’s medical staff,” said Nancy Farber, chief executive officer of Washington Hospital Healthcare System. “Dr. Larson is just one example of the high caliber medical staff that is available locally to care for our patients.”

Dr. Larson accepted the award at the Society’s 52nd Annual Meeting held in San Diego. The meeting attracted more than 10,000 attendees from around the world.

“I am humbled and honored by this recognition from my peers,” says Dr. Larson, who is a 25-year member of the organization and served as its president and chairman of the board in 2001.

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The Gold Medal is bestowed on revered members who have made outstanding contributions to the field of radiation oncology, including research, clinical care, teaching and service according to ASTRO's website, the world's leading organization devoted to radiation oncology. Its members include more than 9,000 medical and scientific professionals who use radiation therapy to treat patients with cancer and other diseases.

The award was presented by Theodore L. Phillips, M.D., professor emeritus of Radiation Oncology at the University of California, San Francisco.

"Dr. Larson is an outstanding clinician, and clinical and laboratory scientist," stated Dr. Phillips in his remarks. "He became a leader of radiation neuro-oncology nationally, established the guidelines for radiation oncology participation in central nervous system radiosurgery, and later became a pioneer in stereotactic body radiosurgery. He has been a great teacher and role model and a supportive friend to many in our specialty."

During his career, Dr. Larson has published hundreds of articles, mostly about brain tumors, and has lectured around the world. He was one of the early users of the Gamma Knife for radiosurgery, a form of radiation therapy that focuses high-powered x-rays on a defined area of the brain to treat brain tumors and other disorders. He also advises the manufacturer of the Gamma Knife about ways to improve the technology and served on a committee that helped developed the PERFEXION, the latest version of the Gamma Knife.

Currently at Washington Hospital, Dr. Larson uses the Gamma Knife PERFEXION™, the most advanced and effective version of the technology. The powerful PERFEXION is the centerpiece of the Gamma Knife Program, part of the Hospital's Taylor McAdam Bell Neuroscience Institute. Washington Hospital was only the third hospital in the world, and the first in the United States, to install the PERFEXION.

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“The fully automated device works extremely well while minimizing the radiation dose to surrounding normal brain tissue,” explains Dr. Larson.

Despite its name, Gamma Knife radiosurgery does not make a surgical incision. Rather, the program’s skilled team of specialists uses direct beams of radiation to treat brain-related disorders without opening the skull. The safe, noninvasive approach is nearly painless, and patients can usually return home in just a few hours, resuming normal activities the next day.

Washington Township Health Care District is governed by an elected board of directors. Unlike a municipal or county hospital, Washington Hospital’s operating expenses, research, community programs, and employee salaries are funded by revenues generated through providing patient and other health care services.

Washington Hospital Healthcare System includes a 359-bed acute-care hospital; the Taylor McAdam Bell Neuroscience Institute; The Gamma Knife[®] Center; Washington Radiation Oncology Center; Washington Outpatient Surgery Center; Washington Outpatient Rehabilitation Center; Washington Outpatient Catheterization Laboratory; Washington Center for Joint Replacement; the Institute for Minimally Invasive and Robotic Surgery; and Washington West, a complex which houses Washington Women’s Center, Outpatient Imaging Center and additional outpatient hospital services and administrative facilities.

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(For more information, please contact Christopher Brown, director of Community Relations, Washington Hospital Healthcare System, (510) 791-3417.)