

Charles R. Thomas, Jr., M.D.



School of  
MEDICINE



### **Dr. Charles Thomas stepping down as radiation medicine chair**

Charles R. Thomas, Jr., M.D., professor and chair of radiation medicine and active member of the Knight Cancer Institute, OHSU School of Medicine, announced that he will step down as chair after nearly 16 years of outstanding service, effective July 1. Dean Sharon Anderson will soon announce an interim chair.

Dr. Thomas will remain on faculty until he returns this fall to his alma mater as section chief/founding chair of the radiation oncology program at the Geisel School of Medicine @ Dartmouth and the Norris Cotton Cancer Center. He plans to continue collaborations with OHSU from Dartmouth.

“Throughout his time as chair of radiation medicine, Dr. Thomas has distinguished himself as a leader, a clinician, a mentor, a teacher, a researcher, an author and a colleague,” said Dr. Anderson. “When Charles speaks, people listen. He blends humility, compassion and grace with searing insight, high expectations and notable effectiveness. We will miss him as chair even as his leadership in the profession will continue.”

After obtaining a bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College, Dr. Thomas received his medical degree from the University of Illinois College of Medicine and trained in medical oncology and radiation oncology. He has obtained triple-board certification in Radiation Oncology (American Board of Radiology), Medical Oncology and Internal Medicine (American Board of Internal Medicine).

He joined the OHSU faculty, accepting the role of chair, in November 2005, and delivered at high levels across missions.

### **Growth across missions**

Under his leadership, the radiation medicine faculty has tripled and the department now serves patients across OHSU Health, the Portland VA Health Care System, Beaverton Knight Cancer Institute, Mid-Columbia Medical Center (The Dalles), Roseburg Community Cancer Center, Bay Area Hospital (Coos Bay) and, most recently, [Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria](#).

The department has brought state-of-the-art tools to treat cancer and improve the patient experience. It was the first in the nation to [implement a virtual simulation tool](#) to help patients better understand and ask questions before procedures, among the first dedicated intra-operative radiotherapy programs and, more recently, a leading provider of multi-site brachytherapy services in the Pacific Northwest, among [other advances](#).

Building up the research culture was another area of focus. Many faculty members have developed active research laboratories and/or collaborative programs; nearly half the physician faculty hold dual M.D./Ph.D. degrees. An unprecedented number of students and residents have obtained competitive extramural funding, including seven ASCO young investigator awards. Dr. Thomas' research portfolio includes co-authoring more than 340 journal articles and serving as co-editor of multiple textbooks.

As part of the education mission, the department established a medical physics graduate program and a fully accredited medical physics residency training program. The department published the [Radiation Oncology Study Guide](#), the go-to study tool for trainees preparing for the American Board of Radiology certification exam. Later this year, the medical physics faculty is publishing a similar tool for physicists preparing for board certification.

Dr. Thomas is an engaged mentor. A [fall 2020 award](#) from the SWOG Cancer Research Network and The Hope Foundation for Cancer Research is among many. The [U.S. military's recognition](#) of Dr. Thomas and department for supporting members' military service was another recent testament. His focus on career development inspired his collaboration on the book [Career Development in Academic Radiation Oncology](#). When visiting other institutions, he always took time to meet with and encourage a broad spectrum of learners, especially of color, to consider OHSU. The late Dean Mark Richardson rewarded his efforts with a [Dean's Award in 2011](#).

### **Using his voice**

Dr. Thomas chose carefully the moments when he spoke out about race. In late 2019, Dr. Thomas co-authored a piece about the twin perils of isolation and hypervisibility that Black physicians experience in medicine, especially in medical subspecialties. It was [published in the New England Journal of Medicine](#) the following July as the country reeled with the beginnings of a national reckoning on systemic racism in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

"Dr. Thomas meets every definition of a leader, and the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute is better because of him," said Brian Druker, M.D., director of the Knight. "He exemplifies our guiding principles of being bold and supportive and has built a connected team. It has been our pleasure to work so closely with him and his entire group, and although he will be missed, we are happy that he will remain involved."

Dr. Thomas announced his news to his department early Monday morning, sharing his pride in their shared accomplishments, which enhance patient outcomes for Oregonians with cancer.

"While I will miss the dedicated and highly collegial environment at OHSU, my parents always harped to my brother and me that we needed to know when to 'leave the party while you're still having fun,'" Dr. Thomas said. "It has been a privilege for me to serve as a steward of our department. Using a boxing analogy, pound-for-pound, the radiation medicine program has consistently 'punched above its weight' with Oregonians benefiting from the tremendous patient-centric approach. My family and I will always be grateful for the patience and support of department members and the OHSU community during this exciting run."