



School of Medicine
Office of the Dean

Graduate Medical Education
500 Parnassus Avenue
MU-250 East
San Francisco, CA 94143-0410
tel: 415/476-4561
fax: 415/502-4166

April 1, 2002

National Academy of Engineering
The Russ Award Committee

Dear Committee,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I write in support of Drs. Gary Onik and Boris Rubinsky for the Russ Award based on their collaboration dealing with imaging guided thermal tumor ablation. As the President-Elect of the Society of Gastrointestinal Radiology it is particularly appropriate that I write this letter since our society was one of the first to recognize the enormous potential of their work when we awarded them the first ever Roscoe Miller Award in 1986. I remember very well the excitement that was generated by their initial experiments demonstrating the ultrasound visualization of cryosurgery and their assertion that this could be used to destroy unresectable liver tumors. At the time the only potential cure for liver cancer patients (primary and metastatic) was surgical removal, chemotherapy and radiation offering only palliative relief. Drs. Onik and Rubinsky's work was the first to suggest that using imaging as guidance that direct destruction of a tumor, which was then left in situ to be removed by the body's defense mechanisms, could offer the same survival advantages as surgical removal. Experience over the next 15 years would prove them correct.

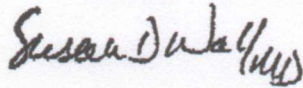
I am proud to say that our society had the judgment and foresight to bestow our award on research that would later prove to have such a major impact on the direction of oncology care and research. Imaging guided cryosurgery and the other imaging guided tumor destructive modalities such as RF, laser, microwave, that grew from the success of their work, clearly represent, even today, the only potential curative treatment other than resection for liver cancer. While image guided thermal tumor destruction gained its notoriety by successfully treating those without hope, its potential advantages over surgical liver tumor removal are significant and I believe that it may supplant traditional surgery in the future. While initially started in the liver their concepts are now being successfully applied in other tumor systems most notably the prostate, breast and kidney.

Their success was not easily come by, however. New cancer treatments unlike many other medical technological advances require a greater amount of time to

test and have to overcome enormous inertia to change. Drs. Onik and Rubinsky are to be applauded for the longevity of their close collaboration and their continuing commitment to advancing their field through technological innovation.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Sincerely,



Susan D. Wall, MD
President-Elect, Society of Gastrointestinal Radiologists
Associate Dean, Graduate Medical Education
Professor and Vice Chair, Radiology