



Information for
patients and
carers

**Stereotactic Radiotherapy to the
Lymph Nodes**

Introduction

You have been offered a course of stereotactic radiotherapy (SABR) for the treatment of cancer in a lymph node(s). This leaflet will explain what this means and how we will plan and give you your treatment.

What is SABR and what are the benefits of this treatment?

SABR is a very precise treatment for tumours where an operation is not recommended. It delivers high doses of radiotherapy from outside the body to a tumour whilst reducing side effects to normal tissues as much as possible.

The benefits of this treatment are:

- Increased chance of tumour control compared to a curative course of standard radiotherapy alone
- Higher dose of radiation delivered in each treatment resulting in fewer treatment appointments (usually 3 treatments).

Are there any alternatives to this treatment?

The Oncologist may have advised you about other possible treatments before referring you for radiotherapy. They will be happy to discuss any concerns you may have. An alternative to SABR could be a standard course of radiotherapy.

If you choose not to have radiotherapy, the cancer may continue to grow. Symptoms may develop and worsen.

Planning Appointments

You will usually have two planning appointments in the radiotherapy department before starting treatment

First Planning Appointment

On your first visit you will have a radiotherapy planning CT scan. Depending on exactly where your tumour is it may be beneficial for us to try and control your breathing pattern. If this is appropriate, the staff will discuss this with you and will ensure you are comfortable with this, before proceeding. The first visit may end at this point depending on how you are feeling. If this is the case we will give you another appointment for your planning CT scan. If however, you are able to proceed and you are happy to do so, we will ask you to lie on the CT couch. This could be done with one or both arms above your head or with both arms by sides, in a position that is as comfortable as possible. The Radiographers will help you with this. We may make a cushion to support your back and arms (called a 'Blue Bag'). If you think you may have difficulties lying in this position, please inform the staff.

Once you are in a suitable position, a planning CT scan will be taken to accurately plan your treatment. You may be given an intravenous injection of contrast (iodine based dye) during the scan. This involves having a cannula (small plastic tube) inserted into your arm to inject the contrast. The dye shows up the organs more clearly on the scan. Please inform the staff if you have any allergies to iodine, if you are diabetic or if you have a hyperactive thyroid. The most common side effects of the contrast are a warm or hot 'flushed' sensation during the

actual injection, and a metallic taste in your mouth. These side effects usually only last a minute or so.

Second Planning Appointment

Your second planning appointment will be on the treatment machine (linear accelerator or linac) – this is referred to as ‘SABR Verification’ on your appointment list. You will be asked to lie in the same position as you were at the time of your planning CT scan. This appointment is to carry out the final checks to ensure that you are as comfortable as possible in the treatment position; and to check the radiotherapy plan on the treatment machine.

Each planning appointment may take up to one hour. Please bring any regular medication with you if you think you may need it whilst you are in the radiotherapy department. Please also bring any additional medication with you that your consultant may have requested you take e.g. painkillers, inhalers etc.

Having Your Treatment

SABR is usually given over 3 treatments, on alternate days Monday to Friday normally on an out-patient basis.

For each treatment, you will be asked to lie in the same position as you were at the planning appointment and to keep as still as possible. Scans are taken to check you are in the correct position for treatment. These scans enable us to adjust the position of the couch you lie on to ensure treatment accuracy. The treatment machine will move around you whilst delivering the radiotherapy. During treatment it is important

for you to keep as still as possible. If you are having your breathing controlled the staff will ensure you fully understand the procedure and talk you through each step, before continuing.

The staff will be monitoring you at all times using closed circuit TV monitor (CCTV). The treatment appointment will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

Side Effects of this Treatment

As your treatment progresses you may experience some side effects. For most people, the side effects are mild and not everyone will have all of these. Please tell us how you are - we are here to help.

Smoking during radiotherapy has been shown to reduce the effectiveness of treatment and increase side effects. If you smoke, please discuss this with the staff so we can offer you support.

Early side effects (during or up to 12 weeks after your treatment)

- **Tiredness.**

You may feel more tired than usual for several weeks after the end of treatment. Rest if you feel tired. If you feel fit enough, gentle exercise can help

- **Sore, red skin.**

You may experience a skin reaction in the area being treated. This reaches a peak after the end of the course of treatment. You

can minimise this by following the advice of the Radiographers (and our skin care leaflet).

- **General Aches and Pains**

Some patients find that they get some muscular aches often in the arms, shoulders or in the back caused by lying on the hard treatment couch and holding either one or two arms up for approximately 30 to 45mins. If you feel any discomfort please tell the staff.

- **Nausea**

If we treat your abdomen then you may experience nausea and vomiting. Your doctor will prescribe you some anti-sickness medication if they think it is necessary. The Radiographers will ask how you are feeling every day, please tell them if you feel unwell and we can get you seen by our review team.

Late side effects

- **Skin.**

There may be some skin change and swelling underneath as a result of scarring. These effects do not usually require any treatment, although it is best for this to be checked by your doctors/oncologist.

Your oncologist will discuss any additional specific early and late side effects of the treatment with you when they discuss the treatment options.

Follow up

- **Appointments:**

You will have at least one review with the treating Oncologist. Longer term follow up and any further treatment will typically continue with your primary Oncologist.

- **Scans:**

Appropriate scans will be carried out to assess response to treatment. The first scan could typically be at least 3 months after treatment.

You should have also received the following leaflets:

Radiotherapy- a general guide for patients and carers

Planning your radiotherapy treatment

Radiotherapy treatment

Skin Care during radiotherapy treatment

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

For general queries

Radiotherapy Reception/Transport queries (01772) 522900

Radiotherapy Appointment queries (01772) 522931

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

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Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

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