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Lancashire Teaching Hospitals
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Information for patients and carers

Stereotactic Radiotherapy to the Spine

Introduction

You have been offered a course of stereotactic radiotherapy (SABR) for oligometastatic cancer in your spine. This leaflet will explain what this means and how we will plan your treatment.

What is Oligometastatic Cancer?

This means that the cancer has spread from its original location (metastasised), but is only visible in a limited number of sites on the body scans.

What is SABR?

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

SABR is an effective way of giving focused radiotherapy, increasing the chance of controlling the tumour whilst sparing normal tissues. It does this by using:

- fewer treatment sessions
- smaller more precise radiation fields
- higher doses of radiation.

Planning your treatment

In order to plan your treatment accurately you will need a radiotherapy planning CT scan and an MRI scan.
The position you lie in for the CT planning scan and radiotherapy treatment will depend on which area of your spine is being treated.
Some patients will have a mask made. This mask is made from a thermoplastic material and is moulded around your head, face and shoulder areas.
Other patients will have a custom “beanbag” cushion made.

It is important that you are comfortable lying in this position for up to an hour, as the same position will be used for the radiotherapy treatment.

Radiotherapy Treatment

Your treatment will typically be given over 3 or 5 daily treatments.
For each treatment, you will be asked to lie in the same position as the CT 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 but to breathe normally. The treatment session will last approximately 30 - 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.

Side Effects

Tiredness - this is normal as your body repairs any normal tissue that has been irradiated. Rest when required and gentle exercise may help.

Reddening or darkening of your skin, or itching in the treatment area, however, you may notice the reaction is present on the front and back of your body. To minimise the skin reaction, avoid friction in the treated

area and bathing in water that is too hot or too cold. Continue to use moisturising cream in any areas where skin remains intact, until side effects resolve.

Feeling sick (Nausea) - if your treatment is within the abdomen. You will be provided with anti-sickness medication in radiotherapy if we anticipate nausea will occur.

Diarrhoea - if your treatment is within the pelvis -This will only be temporary and can be treated with medication which will be prescribed to you if needed.

Pain flare - Pain in the treatment area can get worse after treatment; this is known as pain flare and is due to an inflammatory response in the tissues being treated. Pain often becomes worse 24 to 48 hours after treatment, and you should continue any medications you are taking for pain relief. You will be prescribed medication to help relieve any effects of pain flare.

Sore throat or discomfort swallowing (oesophagitis) - if your treatment is within the neck/chest. Symptoms will be mild and should settle quite quickly.

Follow Up

Your follow up appointment will be in 2 – 4 weeks after completing your course of treatment although this may change at the discretion of your clinician. The appointment will be at Royal Preston Hospital.

Should you require further advice or information please contact:
Radiotherapy Reception/Transport queries 01772 522900

Radiotherapy Appointment queries 01772 522931

Contact details

If you are worried about side effects or need further advice, please contact the Radiotherapy Review Team:

Telephone: 01772 522905
Please leave a message on the answerphone and a member of the team will contact you.

Email: Radiotherapy.ReviewTeam@lthtr.nhs.uk
We aim to get back to you by the next working day.

Alternatively, you can also contact your Breast Care Nursing Team for support and advice.

Should you require further advice or information please contact:
Radiotherapy Reception **(01772) 522900**
Appointments **(01772) 522752**

If you would like to watch a short radiotherapy information video, please scan the QR code.

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:
www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk
www.nhs.uk
www.accessable.co.uk
www.patient.co.uk
www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware
https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/

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

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

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:
patientexperienceandinvolvem@LTHTR.nhs.uk

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Division: Surgery
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