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INTRODUCTION
Welcome to the radiotherapy department. This booklet gives you:

• an introduction to the department – who you will meet and how we work
• an explanation about external beam radiotherapy
• a description of the support services we offer.
You will also receive a leaflet describing radiotherapy for your particular type of cancer.

Please ask for any further information you require about your illness, treatment and its effects. We have many other leaflets and publications.

We encourage you to ask as many questions as you wish from any member of staff. Our aim is to keep you fully informed at all times.

THE TEAM
You will meet many different people in our department. The team consists of:

• **consultants** called clinical oncologists. They are in charge of your care.
• **specialist registrars** who are specialist doctors who work with your consultant to provide your medical care.
• **a senior house officer (FY2)** who is also part of the medical team. You mainly meet him/her on the ward.
• the **radiotherapy review specialists** are nurses. They will meet you when you are first told you are going to have radiotherapy and they will see you regularly throughout your treatment. They are here to support and advise you during your treatment.
• a team of **radiographers** who organise the planning and delivery of your radiotherapy treatment. They have specialist training in all aspects of radiotherapy treatment.
If you would prefer to be treated by female or male radiographers please discuss this with the planning radiographers. This may be possible depending on the staff we have available. We will try not to let this delay you but you may have to wait until the appropriate staff are available. We aim to be sensitive to your needs so please do not hesitate to discuss any concerns with the team caring for you.

- you may also meet a research radiographer if your doctor feels you could benefit from participating in a clinical trial. This is a radiotherapy radiographer who specialises in co-ordinating trials and works closely with your team to provide information and support. Our department is actively involved in clinical research with an aim to provide best possible care for patients, improve treatments and outcomes. Therefore if you would like more information please contact our dedicated research radiographer.

- as part of their training student radiographers work under supervision. We ask for your co-operation in allowing our students to work alongside us, but please tell us if you do not wish them to be present. We will respect this and it will not affect your treatment in any way.

- a team of dosimetrists and physicists who are specialist scientists who make the planning calculations and check the machines to monitor their performance. They have a technician to help them. You may not meet these people directly but may see them in the department.

- you may also meet a clinical nurse specialist for your particular type of cancer, who works closely with the team providing radiotherapy and care at this time.

- an information officer for additional information.

- counsellors offer time and space to discuss any emotional or psychological issues you wish to explore.

- the dietitian who provides support and care and dietary advice. The radiotherapy review specialists or your doctor will contact them as necessary.
• **complementary therapists** offer a free 15 minute massage once a week throughout your treatment.

• **other students.** As we are a teaching hospital, from time to time we ask your co-operation in allowing students to gain knowledge of your condition and needs. We value this but respect that you may prefer not to have them present. **Please tell us. This will not affect your care in any way.**

**Confidentiality**

All of our team of professionals respect your dignity and privacy. All information is kept confidentially. Your case notes will only be shared among those who need to see them to provide your care.

Please discuss any concerns about this with us. If you wish to view your medical records there is information about how to do this on the Royal Free London website or ask any member of staff.

**HOW TO FIND US**

The radiotherapy department can be reached from outside the Royal Free Hospital via an entrance near the two storey car park. It is signposted ‘radiotherapy’.

The out-patient clinic is situated in a corridor immediately behind the main hospital lifts on the ground floor. It is sign posted ‘oncology out-patients’.

The Macmillan cancer information and support centre is also located in oncology out-patients.
TRANSPORT

Hospital transport is provided for those in medical need. You will be assessed to determine your need for this. You cannot normally bring an escort with you.

The hospital is well served by public transport. The 24, 46, 168, 268 and C11 buses stop near the hospital. London Overground trains stop nearby at Hampstead Heath station and the nearest underground is Belsize Park tube station on the Northern line.

Car parking is very limited. There are some allocated parking slots. You need a parking permit that is issued at your first planning appointment. The radiotherapy receptionist will explain to you where the allocated parking spaces are located.

Please note that the allocated parking spaces are only for patients while on radiotherapy treatment and cannot be used for follow up appointments or chemotherapy appointments.

Travel expenses

Patients coming for NHS treatment will be able to claim back their travel expenses if in receipt of a means-tested benefit (income support, income-related employment and support allowance, income-based jobseekers allowance or guarantee pension credit).

You will need to bring proof of your benefit, travel receipts and ask for proof of attendance from the radiotherapy receptionist. You then need to take these to the hospital cashier on the lower ground floor of the main hospital.

You may also be able to claim if you are on a low income. If you are on a low income you will need to fill in form HC1 available from reception or call the customer enquiry line for claiming help with health costs on 0845850 1166.

There is a Macmillan/CAB Advice Service for cancer patients next to the Macmillan cancer information and support centre. Please ask a health professional to refer you.
WHAT IS RADIOTHERAPY?
Radiotherapy is treatment with high energy x-rays that target the site of the cancer. The cancer cells are more sensitive than normal tissue and x-rays damage their genetic code. This means that they are unable to grow.

Radiotherapy also affects the normal tissues of the body, which is the reason you may have side effects, but many are able to recover and heal.

You will be given a separate leaflet describing the side effects for your particular cancer or part of the body you are having treated. A doctor or the radiotherapy review specialist will give this to you. Please ask them or any other member of the team caring for you to explain these further and to address any other queries or concerns you may have. You may wish to phone us (useful numbers are listed at the end of this booklet) or make a note of your questions for your next trip to the department.

How often is it given?
Radiotherapy is given over a period of days or weeks. It is generally given from Monday to Friday. The number of treatments is decided individually. The doctor will discuss your treatment schedule with you.

How long will it take?
Before treatment begins you will need to be seen by the clinical oncologist or registrar (your initial consultation) and the radiotherapy review specialist. You may occasionally have more than one visit for planning, spaced over a few days.

Your treatment is usually daily on consecutive weekdays, but not normally on weekends, for the number of treatments your doctor has prescribed. You will be seen for follow up appointments, which usually begin six to eight weeks after treatment is complete.

Please note when arranging holidays, that the planning and treatment process will take time. We do not advise breaks in treatment and after treatment is complete it takes a few weeks to recuperate.
AGREEING TO TREATMENT

Your doctor (clinical oncologist) will discuss the treatment options with you and give you a clear explanation of your treatment. Together you will consider the risks and benefits of the different treatment options and decide which are best for you.

A family member or carer is welcome to attend this appointment with you.

You will be asked for your consent to begin treatment. This consent is based on you being given information about your treatment including the risks and benefits to you. The decision to have treatment is yours and should be made once you feel you have had sufficient time to consider all the options in consultation with the team. Please contact any member of the team (useful numbers are listed at the end of this booklet), if at any stage you wish to discuss your treatment and care. We want you to be an equal partner in your care, and will respect any decisions you make.

Once you have taken the decision to have treatment, we will give you an appointment for planning or we will contact you. Sometimes more than one planning appointment is needed before beginning treatment.

Please let us know if you have a pacemaker.
PLANNING
This is where the doctor, with the help of the radiographers decides on the exact area to be treated. It involves taking x-rays and measurements of you, which are used to make a map of your treatment known as the treatment plan. The aim is to treat the tumour and minimise treatment to the surrounding area.

Those of you having your head and/or neck area treated will need a special mask to keep you still during your treatment.

Those of you having radiotherapy to your skin do not need to attend for CT scanning and will have your treatment planned on the treatment machine.

Most patients attend the radiotherapy CT scanner. This is a special x-ray machine which helps the doctor identify the exact treatment area.

The radiographers will position you on a couch in as comfortable a position as possible. You can relax and breathe normally. They will then take some x-rays or images and some measurements. The radiographers may make tiny skin marks (no bigger than a pin head) on your skin to act as reference marks. These are permanent marks that are used to accurately reproduce your treatment set up/ plan.

If you would prefer not to have these marks then please discuss this with the radiographers. They may also draw on your skin with pens. Do not worry if these wash off before your next appointment.

This appointment takes approximately one hour. The information gathered at your planning appointment is carefully considered to produce an individual treatment plan for you. This may take a few weeks. You may need to attend an appointment to check aspects of this plan shortly before your treatment begins. We will inform you if this is necessary.
TREATMENT

Radiotherapy is given on treatment machines called linear accelerators. You will be asked to lie in the same position as on the CT simulator. The radiographers will align your permanent marks with the machine. The treatment machine will not usually touch you.

If you are receiving radiotherapy to your skin you will be treated on a different machine which does gently touch you.

We do not make conversation with you once you are in the correct position. This is because we are concentrating on giving your treatment accurately. This normally takes about 10 minutes. We require you to remain still and not move. It may take longer on your first few treatments while the set-up is checked and further checking x-rays/ images may need to be taken.

You may be treated from several different angles, each position taking a few minutes. During this time you will be left alone in the room, although you can be seen and heard via CCTV and intercom by the radiographers. Please try to remain still until we tell you that treatment is complete. We try not to keep you waiting but suggest you allow one hour for each treatment visit. You make your appointments with the radiographers, who will try to find a time to suit you.

Radiotherapy treatment is painless – you cannot see or feel the x-ray.

You will hear a beeping noise, which shows the machine is on. This type of radiotherapy does not make you radioactive.
ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

Side effects vary depending on the part of the body you are having treated. Your doctor and the radiotherapy review specialist will explain these to you and will give you a leaflet explaining radiotherapy for your type of cancer. Please ask if you are uncertain about anything.

The following information describes some of the general side effects you may experience, as well as other things you may be concerned about.

Effects on the skin
Your skin in the treated area may become pink and occasionally feel sore depending on your type of treatment. We will tell you if this is likely to happen to you. Following the instructions given to you by the radiotherapy review specialists will help. You can continue to wash your skin and have a bath or shower, but we advise you not to soak too long or have the water very hot. Use mild non-perfumed soap and pat the area dry rather than rubbing it.

If your skin does become sore, the radiotherapy review specialists can provide advice and cream if you need it.

Very rarely your skin may become discoloured. This is mainly if the skin itself is being treated. This will fade over time. We will discuss this with you if there is a possibility of this occurring.

Will my hair fall out?
This will only happen if the treatment is being applied to a hair bearing area. We will warn you if this might occur and advise you how to care for your hair. If it is possible that you will lose the hair on your head, we can arrange for a wig to be provided. Please discuss this with the radiotherapy review specialists.

Eating and drinking
You can eat and drink normally during your treatment. If you are losing weight please inform us. If you are concerned about eating and drinking please discuss this with us. You can normally drink alcohol but we suggest
beer or wine rather than spirits. Please check with your doctor in case the medication you are on makes this inadvisable.

**Sickness and diarrhoea**
Some patients may feel sick, depending on the area being treated. Please tell us immediately so that we can prescribe some medication for this.

**Tiredness/fatigue**
This is a common side effect of treatment. The tiredness normally increases as treatment progresses and may take several weeks to reduce once your course of radiotherapy is complete. You can help to manage the fatigue by doing some exercise, generally something you enjoy, and planning your day so that you can have rest periods.

It may also help to save your energy for the things you enjoy. If you would like further information about fatigue please ask.

**Fertility and reproduction**
If your pelvis is being treated radiotherapy will affect your fertility.

Please note we advise all patients to avoid conceiving children during radiotherapy. Please discuss this with your doctor.

**Pregnancy**
Please inform us at any time during the planning or treatment if you think that you may be pregnant.

**Late side effects**
Late side effects can occur months or years after your radiotherapy has finished. These late effects depend on the dose of radiotherapy and the area treated. They are described in the individual treatment guides. Your doctor will tell you about any potential late side effects as part of the consent process.
**DRIVING**

The Medical Advisory Branch of the Driving and Vehicle Licensing agency (DVLA) issue guidelines regarding health. These request that certain health conditions are brought to their notice. A D100 form called ‘What you need to know about driving licences’ details this fully. You can obtain this from any Post Office. There is also more information on the DVLA web site.

It is important also to be aware of the situation regarding motor insurance. The Automobile Association (AA) advise that insurance companies must be informed about any new diagnosis of drivers as soon as possible. This is termed ‘a duty of disclosure’. This is recommended as failure to inform your insurer could lead to problems in the event of making a claim.

**WORKING**

Whether you choose to work or not during your radiotherapy depends on your individual circumstances. You can discuss this with your doctor or radiotherapy review specialist.

**CARE DURING TREATMENT**

You will be seen regularly by the radiotherapy review specialists during your treatment.

We have a team of staff who can support you during your treatment, including counsellors to help you discuss any issues that concern you.

If you have any concerns out of the hours the radiotherapy department is open (9am-5pm) please contact your GP or 11 East ward (the radiotherapy ward). If you are acutely unwell please call the emergency services.

**CHILDREN**

Please note that we cannot care for your children during your planning or treatment. If you do need to bring a child with you please ensure you bring a responsible adult to care for them.
WHEN TREATMENT HAS FINISHED

The side effects may continue and even become a little worse. They will then get better. Symptoms will vary in the way they diminish.

You will see a doctor a few weeks after you finish treatment, but if you have any concerns related to your radiotherapy please contact the radiotherapy review specialists.

There is a leaflet entitled ‘Completing your radiotherapy’ available on the radiotherapy reception desk or you can ask for it if you do not receive it before you finish your radiotherapy.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

We appreciate that this may be a time when you need additional information about your illness, treatment, its side effects and other issues.

Macmillan cancer information and support centre

There is a Macmillan cancer information and support centre in oncology out-patients (on the ground floor) with a full selection of information on all aspects of living with cancer including free internet access, plus various activities/events, such as massage therapy and smoking cessation clinics. Please telephone for opening hours.

As part of this service there is a Citizens Advice Welfare Benefits Service available through referral. Please ask your radiotherapy review specialist to refer you for an appointment for expert benefits advice.

Counselling service

There is a counselling service available to discuss any emotional concerns you may have. Contact 020 7472 6739 to book an appointment.

Complementary therapist service

We have a team of complementary therapists available to provide massage. You can have a free 15 minute massage once a week during your treatment. Please ask the radiotherapy review specialist or radiographers to refer you.
Makeover session
There are ‘Look good, feel better’, makeover sessions for all women on treatment. If you would like more information or to book please ask the radiotherapy review specialists, radiographers or contact Cancerkin on 020 7830 2323.

ROYAL FREE CONTACT NUMBERS

Treatment planning
020 7830 2919
For enquiries about your planning/pre-treatment appointments and first treatment appointment.

Treatment reception
020 7830 2919
For enquiries about appointments once treatment begins, and also to book or change your follow up appointment.

Radiotherapy review specialists
020 7830 2919
For help, advice and support about your radiotherapy before during and in the six weeks after your treatment.

Counsellors
020 7472 6739
For counselling and emotional support at any time during and after your illness.

Macmillan cancer information and support centre
020 7794 0500 ext 31337
For information about all aspects of your treatment and about cancer and its effects.

For out of hours advice
11 East ward 020 7830 2989
During your radiotherapy (in the evenings and at the weekend). Please call your GP or the emergency services if you are acutely unwell.
USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

Macmillan cancerline
080 8808 0000 www.macmillan.org.uk

Information prescription service
www.nhs.uk/ips

HOW TO COMMENT ON OUR SERVICE

We welcome comments and suggestions about your care, both good and bad. Please contact the radiotherapy manager via reception.

We have comments slips in the waiting area — please help us improve our service with your feedback.

We regularly display information in the waiting room about our responses to your comments and results of surveys that we ask you to complete. If you would like a personal reply please let us know.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

If you are unhappy with any aspect of your care, please speak to those involved. If you remain unhappy please speak to the radiotherapy manager (contactable via reception).

We also have a PALS (patient advice and liaison service) team at the front of the hospital on the ground floor who are there to help you get the care you need. You can contact them on 020 7830 2174.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Our commitment to you

We aim to offer our patients world class care and expertise and to be positively welcoming, actively respectful, clearly communicating and visibly reassuring.

We aim to ensure the prompt care and treatment of patients, by providing a safe, comprehensive, effective service incorporating current best practice, to meet the individual needs of our patients and their relatives and carers.
This booklet was written by the staff of the radiotherapy department. If you have any comments on this leaflet please call 020 7472 6739 and leave a message for the information officer.

Please call 020 7472 6739 if you would like a large print version.