



Advice for District Nurses

0161 446 3000

Patients who have had radiotherapy to the bladder

This letter is intended for District Nurses. Patients have received both verbal and written information about their treatment and will have Christie patient information including:

Radiotherapy to the Bladder: a guide for patients and their carers (booklet).

Treatment

Your patient has received a course of radiotherapy treatment to the pelvis, specifically the bladder, and will experience some side effects from that treatment to a greater or lesser degree.

Radiotherapy treatment requires high doses of radiation to be given to the patient, but this is divided into small fractions to minimise side effects. The nature and severity of the side effects depend upon factors such as the total radiotherapy dose administered, the number of fractions, the volume of tissue being irradiated and the general condition of the patient.

Patients will be aware of the side effects which include: increased frequency of micturition, increased frequency of bowel habits and tiredness.

Side Effects

Acute side effects

Acute side effects are due to the inflammatory action of treatment on the bladder and the surrounding tissues, which includes a section of the bowel mucosa.

As the bladder becomes inflamed by the treatment, the patient will experience irritative symptoms similar to infective cystitis. Dysuria, frequency and nocturia are commonly reported. It is recommended that the patient ensures that they have an adequate fluid intake of at least two litres a day and to avoid excessive caffeine intake that can irritate the smooth muscle of the bladder. Some patients find drinking cranberry juice helpful.

An antispasmodic may be prescribed in severe cases. If irritative symptoms persist, a urine specimen may be sent for culture to check for the presence of a urinary tract infection.

Sometimes the patient may report haematuria or a worsening of previous urethral blood loss. This is not unusual but should settle a month to six weeks after completion of treatment.

When increased frequency of bowel action, tenesmus or diarrhoea occurs Fybogel is prescribed. If diarrhoea still persists then the introduction of loperamide is considered. It is recommended that the patient takes Fybogel until the symptoms lessen which is usually at about 4 to 6 weeks.

General effects of the radiotherapy treatment can cause tiredness which may be compounded by lack of sleep caused by the troublesome symptoms.

Long term effects

Occasionally after the acute side effects have resolved patients may be left with a reduced bladder capacity due to loss of elasticity of the bladder from the healing process following treatment.

In rare cases male patients may have erectile difficulties following treatment and female patients may experience some narrowing of the vagina.

Follow Up

Your patient will receive a telephone call from the urology specialist nurse 6 weeks after the treatment has been completed to check that the acute reactions of the treatment have settled. After this the patient will normally be discharged from The Christie follow up.

Your patient will usually be seen by the referring department of urology at the local hospital with a cystoscopy 4 months after the treatment has finished and any subsequent treatment decided from there.

If there is a concern about the patient's health and you feel that he/she needs an appointment with a member of The Christie team please ring the appropriate consultant's secretary quoting the patient's hospital number.

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| Dr Choudhury's secretary | 0161 446 8323 |
| Dr Elliott's secretary | 0161 446 7107 |
| Dr Livsey's secretary | 0161 446 8278 |
| Dr Logue's secretary | 0161 446 3355 |
| Dr Wylie's secretary | 0161 446 3341 |
| Dr Tran's secretary | 0161 918 7197 |
| Dr Alam's secretary | 0161 446 3360 |

Contact numbers

In case of any queries please ring:

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|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Jane Booker | Macmillan urology nurse specialist | 0161 446 8018 |
| Sharon Capper | Macmillan urology nurse specialist | 0161 446 3856 |
| Cath Pettersen | Macmillan urology nurse specialist | 0161 446 7328 |
| Jeanette Lyons | Nurse clinician | 0161 446 8594 |

Out of office hours please call the on-call radiotherapy doctor via switchboard on 0161 446 3000.