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A Pre-Treatment Clinic for High-risk Head & Neck Cancer Patients Provision of Cancer Services

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Introduction

High-risk Head and Neck (H&N) cancer patients are seen in a specific 'pre-treatment' clinic prior to treatment interventions.

The multidisciplinary service is conducted by the Cancer Nurse Coordinator, Dietitian, Speech Pathologist and Social Worker.

Patients' needs are assessed, education and support on management of functional and psychosocial issues is provided.

Aim

To provide early assessment and response to the needs of people with cancer of the H&N region who require surgery, radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy.

To minimise distress from the potential psychosocial impact, improve treatment recovery and functional outcomes, enhance quality of life for the patients and carers and provide best practice.

Method

Patients are classified high-risk if their treatment plan involves:

- extensive surgery
- high radiotherapy (RT) dose
- concurrent chemotherapy and RT
- or have significant co-morbidities

Initial consultations are between diagnosis and treatment commencement.

Standardised assessments include:

- The EORTC H&N35 - Quality of Life tool
- Distress Thermometer
- Patient Generated Subjective Global Assessment (PG-SGA) - nutrition assessment
- Weight
- Speech Handicap Index
- Aspiration-Penetration scale
- Patient Satisfaction survey

Follow ups assessments are at 3, 6 and 12 months.

Results

Distress Thermometer (DT) results:

134 patients between 29/01/10 to 30/06/11

71% male: 29% female

Age range: 35-93 years

Median age: 64 years

DT's range: 0-10. Higher scores indicate higher distress

Average DT score: 2.6

Approximately one third (37.3%, 50/134) scored DT 4 or higher and thus referred for psychosocial intervention.

Of these 50 patients:

Three-quarters expressed anxiety symptoms (76% worry, 66% nervousness, 34% fear)

Two thirds expressed depression symptoms (64% sadness, 46% depression, 26% loss of interest)

Almost half (46%) expressed anxiety and depression symptoms.

Patients' Satisfaction survey results:

35 patients (Table 1).

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Clinicians' Satisfaction survey results:

13/15 (87%): 4 consultants; 5 registrars; 3 allied health; 1 nurse (Table 2).

Conclusion

H&N cancer patients suffer a high symptom burden and have complex needs.

This pre-treatment clinic provides an opportunity for patients to have their physical functioning, emotional and social needs assessed by all four health disciplines in one consultation.

Relevant education, interventions, referrals and supportive care are thus implemented before treatment begins.

The service is time and cost effective.

Essentially it is a preventative care model versus reactive.

We catch them before they fall!



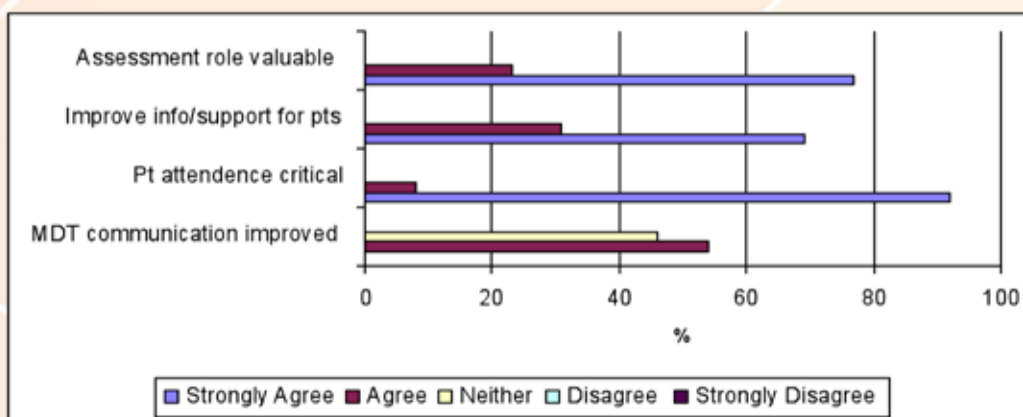
Radiotherapy treatment



Table 1: Patients' Satisfaction survey - Main responses

Satisfaction parameters	Result
Attending Pre-treatment clinic useful	49/50 (98%) satisfied / very satisfied 1/50 neutral
Support & guidance provided	50/50 (100%) satisfied / very satisfied
Anxiety allayed	40/50 (80%) satisfied / very satisfied 10/50 (20%) neutral
Opportunity for questions	50/50 (100%) satisfied / very satisfied
Knowledge of staff & services improved	50/50 (100%) satisfied / very satisfied

Table 2: Clinicians' Satisfaction survey - Main responses



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