

THREE COUNTIES CANCER NETWORK RADIOTHERAPY OPTIONS AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

Report By: Paul Edwards, Director of Commissioning, PCT

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

1. To seek the Committee's views on current regional radiotherapy service options and appropriate next steps.

Financial implications

2. None identified, PCT has made provision in financial assumptions and with part costs associated in repatriation of service / costs from Gloucestershire Hospitals Trust..

Background

3. Three Counties Cancer Network has outlined three options for extra radiotherapy services as described in its press release attached at Appendix A:
 - Continue expansion at the Gloucestershire Oncology Centre in Cheltenham
 - Develop satellite service at Hereford County Hospital
 - Develop satellite service at Worcestershire Royal Hospital.
4. Hereford Hospital Trust and the Primary Care Trust appointed an independent consultancy firm to investigate the feasibility of having radiotherapy facilities at Hereford Hospital. The resulting report concludes that a site at Hereford County Hospital could justify having 1 Linac (linear accelerator) in the near term – with a view to having 2 Linac machines operating in the medium term. Herefordshire PCT is therefore recommending to the Three Counties Cancer Network Board the development of radiotherapy at Hereford County Hospital – with the installation of 2 bunkers and at least 1, with possibly 2, Linac machines installed. This would complement the ongoing development of the Charles Renton Unit. MacMillan/Charles Renton fundraising has been very successful. The Hospital Trust would ask MacMillan to continue to support the capital project and necessary fundraising for the new Linac machine/s.
5. This would be the first satellite radiotherapy service in the UK. The development of the Hereford option is supported by the National Cancer Strategy, particularly given the national recommendation that no patient should have to travel more than 45 minutes for cancer treatment. Very few places in Herefordshire – and Powys, where many of Hereford County Hospital patients come from – are within 45 minutes travelling distance of Cheltenham.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Sara Siloko, Directorate Services Officer (Health) 01432 261804

6. Radiotherapy treatment has to be taken each day for up to 60 days, at about 10 minutes a day. It makes patients feel nauseous and tired.
7. Herefordshire has a smaller population than Worcestershire, but proportionally more who have to make unacceptably long journeys for radiotherapy treatment. There are instances of Herefordshire patients declining radiotherapy treatment because they cannot tolerate the daily journey to Cheltenham. It has been suggested that Cheltenham could offer dedicated accommodation to patients for the duration of their treatment; this is unlikely to be considered a desirable alternative, particularly given the length of treatment and therefore the enforced absence from family at a time of emotional need.
8. Herefordshire PCT's calculations do not rely on having usage of the facility by clients from Worcestershire or Gloucestershire, although there may be a number near the Herefordshire borders who will find Hereford County Hospital easier to reach than either Cheltenham or Coventry.
9. Specialist radiotherapy staff may be difficult to recruit, although this is not envisaged to be insurmountable. The Three Counties Cancer Network will support a satellite facility with specialist oncology staff from Cheltenham.
10. Worcestershire currently sends patients to three different Cancer Network centres. Therefore only South Worcestershire is affected directly by this decision. The chairs of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire health scrutiny committees have been consulted and asked for their views. It is unlikely that the Gloucestershire PCT or Health Scrutiny Committee will recommend a Cheltenham option ahead of a satellite facility, given the travelling times involved for some patients using the Three Counties Cancer Network services. It should also be noted that the Strategic Health Authority is supportive of the Hereford option.
11. The 3CCN has asked all three counties' Health Scrutiny Committees to recommend robust and defensible consultation strategies that it can use to guide its decision-making process. The form of the consultation is the responsibility of the individual PCTs involved, but Appendix B outlines some expert advice on possible methodology. The Three Counties Cancer Network Board would like to achieve a decision at its meeting in June 2008.

RECOMMENDATION

- That**
- (a) the Committee endorses the Hereford County Hospital option for extra radiotherapy services provided on a satellite basis;
and**
 - (b) the Committee asks the Three Counties Cancer Network to consult on this preferred option, taking account of Appendix B to the report.**

Background Papers

- None identified

APPENDICES:

- A. Press release from Three Counties Cancer Network 24 December 2007
- B. Recommendations from Euan McPherson, Involving People Manager, PCT, on possible consultation methodology

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