



Cancer of the Cervix Patients

This booklet has been written for patients with Cancer of the Cervix. Each topic tries to answer your probable questions.

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet is to give you some information on the cancer of the cervix and its overall management. We trust it will be useful to you and all those around you that you may want to share the information with.

At Oncocare we take a multidisciplinary (many specialist involved) and multimodality (many ways of treating) approach to your care. Gynaecologists, psychologists, surgeons, in addition to medical officers and your oncologists will all input into your management.

Treatments may include radiotherapy, surgery, chemotherapy and brachytherapy to mention only the major ones, and these can be given in a variety of combinations. Each treatment will be discussed with you, and will be planned to suit your individual requirements.

EXTERNAL BEAM RADIOTHERAPY

Radiotherapy (EBRT) is given on a high energy X-ray machine, the linear accelerator (LINAC). It is given in short daily sessions over a number of weeks, around 6 weeks, excluding weekends.

The scanning process is the first step in EBRT. You need to empty your bladder and rectum before

daily treatment. The full scanning process entails you being made to lie on a CT-Scan bed and your treatment area will be exposed and marks will be put on specific points on the pelvic area, and small metal balls will be stuck on your skin to make the skin marks visible on the X-rays. These marks may be made more permanent by giving you ink pricks on the centre of each mark.

Computerised treatment planning is a process where the planner uses the scan images to calculate how best to give the treatment. This is a process when we used the computer to make sure that a good amount of radiation is given to the affected tissue, but very little to the normal tissue nearby. There will be some time, maybe a few days between the times you are scanned to the time you are asked to start the daily radiotherapy on the LINAC.

SIDE EFFECTS



Various reactions can come up with time, you may begin to feel a lot of differences to your normal body functions. These reactions, which are side effects to radiotherapy may happen with you, or they may not happen at all, people respond differently. Some of these effects can be one or more

of the following:



BOWEL CHANGES

Radiotherapy to the pelvis and abdomen will make you feel sick, and cause changes in bowel movements such as an increase in wind, griping pains, urgency to get to the toilet, diarrhoea, it is important to eat a normal diet and drink plenty of fluids.

BLADDER IRRITATION

Bladder irritation can show in that you will go to the toilet many times, and you feel an urgency to pass urine and sometimes you can have a burning sensation on passing urine. Plenty of fluids (6-8 large cups a day) are recommended.

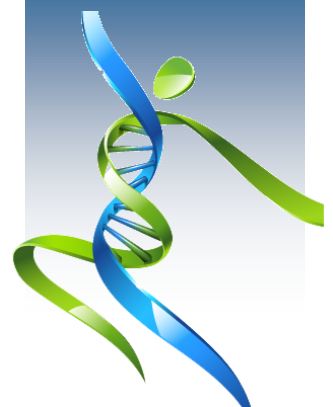
FATIGUE

Tiredness or fatigue will affect you a lot. This is because your body will be repairing the damage caused to your normal cells by the radiation. You need to rest a lot and do reduced movements. Your energy will be improved with good eating and adequate fluid intake as well as taking time to rest when you can during the day and at night.



Outline:

- > INTRODUCTION
- > EXTERNAL BEAM RADIATION THERAPY
- > SIDE EFFECTS
- > CHEMOTHERAPY
- > BRACHYTHERAPY
- > TREATMENT COMPLETION



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SIDE EFFECTS

IRRITATIONS

You may feel irritation and vaginal narrowing and also discharge. Let the treating team know if your discharge increase or has an offensive odor. The doctor will give you special advice on how to dilate your vaginal and also how to continue with sexual intercourse if you wish .

Your skin on treatment area (from waist to top of the legs) may be irritated by radiation and become more delicate, but you have to continue bath or shower while on treatment. Use mild soap on the treatment area, and lukewarm water, but do not sit in the bath for a long time. Do not rub the treatment area, gently pat skin dry and apply mild non-fragranced lotion. You may lose hair on the area you are being treated.

WHAT TO DO

It is important that you tell the treatment team any of the side effects you may experience. These effects will subside with medical intervention, and will also gradually reduce and clear a few weeks after you complete your treatments. You will also be seen once every week by the doctor to review the progress of your treatment.



CHEMOTHERAPY

Cancer treatment includes anti-cancer drugs (chemotherapy, given thorough drips over a few hours). These can be given alone, but for most cases they will be given together with radiation (chemo-radiation).

Chemotherapy will be given once every week for the weeks that you will be on treatment, and blood tests will be done before each chemotherapy treatment to make sure that your bloods are ok to get chemotherapy. On the day that you receive both chemotherapy and radiotherapy you receive radiotherapy after you finish the Chemotherapy.



Your chemotherapy drugs may cause constipation, whilst your radiotherapy may cause diarrhoea, so ultimately your bowel movements may be erratic, but inform the treatment each time they are not normal.

You are to contact the centre if you have one of the following side effects:

- ◆ temperature goes up,
- ◆ suddenly feel unwell or
- ◆ you develop any bleeding.

BRACHYTHERAPY

You may have brachytherapy prescribed for you depending on the doctor's preference. This involves putting small tubes or applicators inside your body. This helps increase the amount of radiation to the area where the disease started, but it does not give much more dose to the surrounding organs.

For the doctor to put the applicators inside you, you will be given a small dose to make sure you do not feel much pain during the process. You will be made to lie on the couch with your legs open and the doctor will place the tubes inside you. The treatment machine will be connected to the tubes inside you by plastic tubing.

You will be quite awake throughout the treatment and alone in the treatment room but the treatment team will watch you by cameras in the room from outside. Laying for too long may make you stiff, and you may feel nauseous but over all, the side-effects are quite minimal.

After some months after your treatments you may have hardening, shortening and tightening of the vagina, instructions on dilating you receive when you start treatment help you prevent this. The treatment may affect your ovaries making it impossible to fall pregnant and also stopping your periods.

Your lymph-nodes may be affected, making you prone to infections and may fail to drain causing your feet to swell.

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TREATMENT COMPLETION

You will be reviewed by the oncologist at regular intervals such as after six weeks to start with, and these will be increased to after every three months to after every six months with the passing years.

In each review session the doctor will hear from you how the treatment worked for you and will assess your response to the treatment and any other side effects and may request further imaging and laboratory examinations to ascertain your response.



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Further Information

You are encouraged to keep in touch with your oncologist. Should you need anything from the staff at the center, or have questions you may use the following phone numbers:

04 776009-10, 086 77004556, 0774 395 048 or simply walk into our center.

You may also reach out to us on our website or on social media platforms:



Oncocare is here for you, caring for you is our priority.



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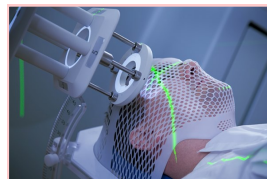
About Oncocare

Oncocare Zimbabwe is established to provide high quality, comprehensive cancer care, through a fully integrated, multidisciplinary and cost effective oncology delivery system.

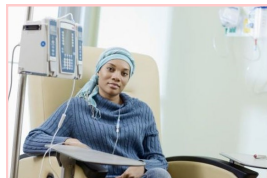
We aim to reduce incidence, morbidity and mortality of Cancer. We will achieve excellence in research, education and community outreach.

Services

Radiation Therapy



Chemotherapy



Diagnostics and Screenings

