

NEWS


INFOGRAPHICS


Cancer causes more than
one in every four deaths^[1]



In 2014 more than
167,000 people
across the UK died
from cancer^[2]



Although the mortality
rate for cancer is decreasing,
our ageing population means
the number of people dying
from cancer is expected to
increase from

157,000 deaths
in 2010 to

193,000 deaths
in 2030^[3]

i. ONS - <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/death-reg-sum-tables/2013-info-deaths-2013.html>
ii. 147,000 in England and Wales (ONS), 16,167 in Scotland (NRS), 4,323 in Northern Ireland (NISRA)
iii. CRUK <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/mortality/projections#heading-One>



New investments by NHS England will increase patient access to innovative radiotherapy treatment



PHOTOS: ROYAL MARSDEN

Pioneering radiotherapy treatment benefits cancer patients

By Lorena Tonarelli

Dr Nicholas van As, medical director, consultant clinical oncologist and the clinical lead for stereotactic body radiotherapy (SBRT) at The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, London, explains: "Around 50 per cent of patients who are cured of their cancer receive radiotherapy, making this a gold standard treatment for a wide range of cancers, such as those of the prostate, breast, lung and head and neck."

Radiotherapy destroys cancer cells using high-energy radiation coming from a machine, usually a linear accelerator. The radiation can also originate from a small amount of radioactive material temporarily placed inside the body.

"Radiotherapy is very effective, and relatively cheap compared with newer drugs and some surgical techniques. New machines and developments in radiotherapy planning have dramatically

improved how radiotherapy is delivered, leading to improved outcomes and reduced side effects.

Precision-targeted treatment

Techniques such as intensity-modulated, image-guided and stereotactic body radiotherapy enable tumours to be much more accurately targeted, minimising damage to surrounding healthy tissues and reducing treatment times from several weeks to as little as one week. As Dr van As notes, "This has huge implications, not only for patients but also for the NHS, because you are using a lot less radiotherapy treatment."

Leading the way

In June 2015 NHS England announced a £15 million investment to increase patient access to an innovative radiotherapy system called stereotactic ablative radiotherapy, or SABR. Another cutting-edge radiotherapy machine, known as

"Around 50 per cent of patients who are cured of their cancer receive radiotherapy"



Dr Nicholas van As
medical director, consultant clinical oncologist and clinical lead for stereotactic body radiotherapy (SBRT), The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, London

the MR linac, is installed at The Royal Marsden and The Institute of Cancer Research, London thanks to a £10 million grant from the Medical Research Council. The machine is considered a game changer, as it allows to more precisely irradiate moving tumours – some the most challenging to treat with radiotherapy. The UK will have two of the only seven MR linacs available worldwide.

The future

As radiotherapy continues to evolve, its use in cancer treatment is expected to become increasingly more refined and personalised, and to further strengthen its already important role in improving the survival rate and quality of patients' lives. ■



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