

## **HHS discloses issue with a specific type of radiation therapy at the Juravinski Cancer Centre**

In late November 2018, Hamilton Health Sciences discovered an issue with the equipment used to deliver brachytherapy (BT) to patients with cervical cancer.

The only patients who may have been affected by this issue are those who received this specific kind of therapy – BT – for cervical cancer in 2017 and 2018.

Physicians, nurses and other members of our team have met with the affected patients to discuss the next steps in their care.

We are deeply sorry for all of the anxiety caused to patients and their loved ones.

Other patients at the Juravinski Cancer Centre are NOT affected.

Concerned patients, caregivers and family members can contact Patient Experience at 905-521-2100 ext. 75240 or by email at [patientexperience@hhsc.ca](mailto:patientexperience@hhsc.ca).

## **Questions & Answers**

### **What was the actual issue detected?**

On November 27, we discovered a problem with radiation equipment used to deliver brachytherapy (BT) to patients with cervical cancer. This means that radiation may not have been targeted correctly.

### **What is brachytherapy?**

It is a form of radiation treatment to deliver radiation from inside the body. The equipment features tubes to position radiation internally on a very precise area. The length of one of the guide tubes used to deliver radiation to the cervix was longer than it should have been.

### **What does this mean if I have received radiation therapy at the Juravinski Cancer Centre (JCC)?**

Only those patients with cervical cancer who received a very specific type of radiation therapy, called brachytherapy, in 2017 or 2018 are at risk of being affected. No other patients from the JCC are affected. All patients at potential risk have been contacted. If you have not been contacted by your physician, nurse or any other members of the JCC team, you are NOT affected by this issue.

### **How many patients are affected?**

At this point, we estimate that 25 patients may be affected. We apologize to the women affected and we have implemented a proactive and expedited care plan for them.

**What are the potential consequences to patients?**

The radiation may not have been targeted correctly. Patients who may be affected have been contacted and they have met with their care providers for assessment and identify next steps in their care. We are doing everything possible to support them and their families.

**How can you be certain that no other patients receiving radiation therapy, and specifically brachytherapy, are not affected?**

This was an unfortunate and rare occurrence and we apologize to our patients. It is isolated to an issue with the equipment ONLY used for BT for cervical cancer patients between January 2017 and December 2018. Our review indicates that that no other patients receiving or who have received radiation treatment, and specifically BT, at the Juravinski Cancer Centre have been affected.

**I am patient and have more questions. Who can I contact?**

Patients and families can contact the hospital's patient line at 905-521-2100 ext. 75240 or [patientexperience@hhsc.ca](mailto:patientexperience@hhsc.ca), or speak to their physician about their treatment.

**What did HHS do when it became aware of this equipment problem?**

The equipment was replaced and removed from service and we have paused our BT program for patients with cervical cancer. We have called on external experts to conduct a review of our radiation therapy programs.

**Have you notified all of the patients who may have been affected?**

Yes. Physicians, nurses and other members of the care teams have met with the patients whose treatment may have been affected. We have implemented a proactive and expedited care plan for them.

**Who is responsible for checking the equipment? How often is it checked?**

Examining the quality assurance component of the BT therapy program is part of our current review. We are engaging external experts in this process. We have confirmed that this issue does not affect any other radiation therapy, including other uses of BT, at the JCC, as the equipment in question was specific to the cervical brachytherapy program.

**Has this ever happened before?**

No.

**How can you be certain that this won't happen again?**

The results of the review will guide the strengthening of our quality assurance and help restore the trust of our patients in the care we provide.

**Was this due to an equipment issue or human error?**

The causes of the issue with the brachytherapy equipment have not been identified. Once known, the results of the review will guide the strengthening of our quality assurance and help restore the trust of our patients in the care we provide.