Oncology

# Introduction

Oncology is a broad subject and it will not be possible to cover all aspects comprehensively within your 5 week attachment. It is important that you gain exposure to the treatment of some common cancers and an understanding of the patient pathway from presentation to diagnosis and treatment and the holistic impact of being diagnosed with cancer. You should also appreciate the different aims of treatment (radical, adjuvant and palliative) and should directly observe cancer therapies including radiotherapy and chemotherapy. In addition, research is a vital component of oncology and there will be opportunities for you to meet research staff (nurses and trial coordinators) and patients involved in trials to gain practical experience of clinical research in practice. You will meet Clinical Oncologists and Medical Oncologists and both give systemic therapy to patients, but only the Clinical Oncologists administer radiotherapy. Medical Oncologists have a strong research base and are involved in clinical trials.

This course guide sets out appropriate learning objectives which you should aim to cover through the programme of taught sessions and self-directed learning. Throughout this attachment, you should complete a minimum of six case studies as detailed below. As part of your analysis of these cases, there are a number of questions to assist reflective learning. There is also a list of required clinical experiences which you should complete and ensure that these are signed off at the time of the activity and the completed Clinical Experience Log Sheet (Oncology) is signed by your Undergraduate Clinical Supervisor.

At the beginning of a course in oncology and palliative care some students are apprehensive and may feel ill equipped to talk to patients, many of whom know they are going to die. Patients may ask difficult questions or recount distressing stories of their experiences. Don’t be afraid to admit that you don’t know the answer to their questions and take the opportunity to learn from this attachment how professionals do or should deal with emotive situations.

Some of you may have had experience of cancer with a member of your family or a friend, and may find aspects of the course difficult.   We would like to help and support you and suggest that you discuss this with your supervisor at the first meeting. Dr Katie Urch is also available for help and support throughout the course.

You should aim to meet with your Undergraduate Clinical Supervisor on a weekly basis to discuss your progress and any issues or concerns that you have. These meetings will also allow you to present and discuss your case studies. It is helpful if you print out your timetable so that your Supervisor knows when they will see you in the clinics or wards and to plan your meetings.

Each student will be assigned to core activities; one common cancer clinic; one uncommon cancer clinic; one multidisciplinary meeting; one radiotherapy session and one chemotherapy session.

The inpatient wards are only at the Charing Cross and Chelsea and Westminster Hospitals. If you do not have a scheduled session, go to the wards to see patients. Introduce yourself to the senior nurse and the junior doctor and ask for the names of patients you could see. At Charing Cross, you can attend the Patient Board Round which is held each day at 0900 hours in the Treatment Room on 6 North and you could also be allocated patients from this meeting.

**Radiotherapy Session**

The aim of the radiotherapy session is to observe the journey the patient makes through CT pre-treatment assessment, planning and treatment, and to talk to patients who are undergoing treatment. (Refer to Clinical Case Study 1 in your guide)

It is more comfortable for patients and staff if there is one student only in each area. Students will rotate through the three different areas and spend 45 minutes in each area. Agree this rotation between your group when you arrive and report to the receptionist who will direct you to the different areas. Staff will point you in the direction of the next area and it is your responsibility to move on after 45 minutes.

The Radiotherapy Centre at Charing Cross is located on the ground floor and the main entrance is off St Dunstan’s Road. You can also follow the signs from the main corridor in the Laboratory Block.

Morning session 0900 and afternoon session 1400 hours

CT Simulator (AQSim) Ground Floor

Planning First Floor

Linear Accelerator (4 treatment rooms; LA3; LA4; LA5; LA6) Ground Floor

A useful website to access before the visit is: [www.nhs.uk/ips](http://www.nhs.uk/ips)

This has been set up to provide information to patients and the Imperial Trust is a Beacon for this initiative.

**Chemotherapy Session**

# The aim of chemotherapy session is to observe the delivery of chemotherapy and to talk to patients about their experience and pairs of students will have one session at: Charing Cross, St Mary’s, Hammersmith or Chelsea and Westminster.

# On arrival introduce yourself to the senior nurse and ask if you could be allocated to a patient. There might be an opportunity to talk to a patient or a family member in the waiting room but please be aware of their privacy and confidentiality.

# Morning session 0900-1230 and afternoon session 1330-1700 hours

**Multidisciplinary Meetings (MDT)**

Each MDT has a co-ordinator who arranges the meetings and takes the notes. We suggest that you introduce yourselves to the co-ordinator who may ask the members to introduce themselves or give you the names of the members.