

Western Hospital

## Your Radiotherapy Choices

You are being treated at the Western Hospital. As a public patient you are entitled to receive your treatment free of charge. As part of your treatment, your doctor thinks you would benefit from radiotherapy.

### Public and private radiotherapy.

Radiotherapy services are not provided by all public hospitals. Some public hospitals do however have private radiotherapy services close by.

Western Hospital is an example of a public hospital that does not have radiotherapy, but located at the nearby Western Private Hospital is a private radiotherapy service - the Western Radiation Oncology Centre.

If your doctor thinks you would benefit from radiotherapy, you can choose whether or not to be treated at a public radiotherapy service or a private radiotherapy service.

This pamphlet is to help you choose between a public and private radiotherapy service.

### What is the difference?

The quality of the services provided by public radiotherapy services and private radiotherapy services are comparable.

What is different is cost and choice of radiation oncologist. There may also be differences in the length of time before an appointment is available or the convenience of the service in terms of distance from home, availability of public transport or parking or the cost of travel or parking.

### Choosing to go to a public radiotherapy service

- Radiotherapy at a public hospital radiotherapy service will be provided to you at no cost.
- The nearest public hospital radiotherapy services are the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute in East Melbourne, the Austin Hospital in Heidelberg and the Alfred Hospital in Prahran. You can choose to receive treatment at one of these hospitals.
- At a public hospital, you may have to wait for a radiotherapy appointment to be available. The same radiation oncologist may not treat you every time you go, but the doctors work as a team to ensure your individual needs are met.

### Choosing to go to a private radiotherapy service

- At a private radiotherapy service you may not have to wait long for a radiotherapy appointment.
- The same radiation oncologist will oversee your entire treatment. As with radiotherapy services available in a public hospital, the service that you will receive at a private radiotherapy service will be of a high quality.
- The radiation oncologist attends team meetings to discuss your care at the Western Hospital.
- If you choose to have radiotherapy at a private radiotherapy service you will have to pay some of the cost.
- By law, the radiation oncologist who will be responsible for your treatment must provide you with an accurate assessment of what your radiotherapy will cost. Make sure you ask about this.
- Some of the cost of your radiotherapy can be claimed on Medicare. Ask the private radiotherapy service for a brochure about the Medicare Safety Net.

You are under no obligation to use a particular private service. You may find it more convenient to go to another private radiotherapy service in metropolitan Melbourne. The choice is yours.

If you do choose to go to the Private Western Radiation Oncology Centre, then you might like to be aware of some of the payment options available. If you choose a different private radiotherapy service then you should ask whether it offers various payment options.

### **Paying for private radiotherapy at Western Radiation Oncology Centre**

#### **- Your options**

Western Radiation Oncology Centre has a brochure that explains how you may pay for the treatment you receive. You should ask for that brochure and see what suits you best.

You do not have to pay the bill immediately. When you receive the account, you can send it to Medicare. Medicare will send you a cheque for the amount that it will pay. You can then send the Medicare cheque to Western Radiation Oncology Centre with a personal cheque for the difference.

You do not have to pay all at once the difference between the Medicare contribution and what you have been charged. You can talk to Western Radiation Oncology Centre's accounts staff and offer to pay the costs off over time. You can suggest how much you are able to pay; it might be \$10 or \$20 per week.

You can ask your doctor at Western Hospital to make an appointment for you to see a Radiation Oncologist at Western Radiation Oncology Centre, or any other private radiotherapy service so that you can discuss your treatment and fees.

### **Making a decision**

If any of this information is difficult to understand, please talk to your nurse, doctor or social worker. Please do not be embarrassed to say that paying for radiotherapy may be difficult. It can be expensive for some people. It is best to discuss this before starting treatment.

Before you decide what service to use, think about what is best for you and ask questions. Some suggested questions are listed here.

### **Questions you might like to ask**

How much will I have to pay for my full course of radiotherapy treatment?

Can I get to the radiotherapy service using public transport? If I drive or a family member or friend drives me to the radiotherapy service, will there be parking available? Will there be a cost for parking?

Will I have to wait long for an appointment to see a radiation oncologist? Will I have to wait long each time I have an appointment?

Will I see the same radiation oncologist throughout my treatment? If I don't see the same radiation oncologist, will he/she talk to the other radiation oncologists about my individual needs?

If you are not sure what questions to ask or who you should speak to, ask your nurse, doctor or social worker to help.

*Names and telephone numbers of key staff available to answer further questions*