

9 Not appropriate to routinely use extensive locoregional therapy in metastatic breast cancer patients with minimal symptoms attributable to the primary tumour.

WHAT THIS PRACTICE IS ABOUT

This practice is about the use of surgery or radiotherapy to treat the breast and the area around the breast in people with metastatic breast cancer (also called 'locoregional therapy'). It highlights the importance of only treating the person's breast if the person has symptoms suggesting that treatment will improve their quality of life.

Surgery and radiotherapy are used routinely to treat early breast cancer with the aim of removing the cancer before it spreads to other parts of the body. In people with metastatic breast cancer, cancer has spread to other parts of the body. Treating the cancer in the breast is unlikely to affect the overall response to treatment. If cancer has spread, it is more important to control the cancer in other parts of the body.

Surgery or radiotherapy to the breast may be offered to some people with metastatic breast cancer – for example, if cancer in the breast is causing significant pain or other symptoms, or significant anxiety. Treatment to the breast may also be an option if the cancer in other parts of the body is only in a small area or is growing very slowly.

WHY THIS PRACTICE MIGHT BE IMPORTANT FOR YOU

If you have metastatic breast cancer you may think that it is important to treat the cancer in your breast. However, if you have few symptoms in your breast, treatment to this area using surgery or radiotherapy is unlikely to affect your overall response to treatment. It is more important to focus on controlling the cancer as much as possible in the parts of the body where cancer has spread.

The decision about whether to have surgery or radiotherapy to the breast is an individual one and will depend on your symptoms and overall health. If the idea of not having treatment to the breast is making you anxious, it is important to talk to your doctors about your concerns so that you can make the decision that is right for you.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What treatment(s) do you recommend and why?

What are my options if the cancer in my breast is worrying me or causing me pain or distress?

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the *Cancer Australia Statement – Influencing best practice in metastatic breast cancer* and to access supporting resources, visit canceraustralia.gov.au/statement



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Influencing best practice in metastatic breast cancer

Metastatic breast cancer is cancer that has spread from the breast to other parts of the body. It is also known as advanced breast cancer or secondary breast cancer. People with metastatic breast cancer experience a range of emotional, physical and practical challenges.

The aim of treatment and care for people with metastatic breast cancer is to control the growth and spread of the cancer, relieve symptoms and help people live as well as possible. There is evidence that approaches to treatment and care vary across Australia.

It is important that everyone with metastatic breast cancer receives evidence-based information, treatment and support that reflect their individual needs and preferences. This includes avoiding treatments that may not provide meaningful benefits or may cause harm.

ABOUT THE STATEMENT

The aim of the *Cancer Australia Statement – Influencing best practice in metastatic breast cancer* is to reduce unwarranted variation in the treatment and care of people with metastatic breast cancer in Australia.

The Statement focuses on 10 practices that have been identified as appropriate or inappropriate in the treatment and care of people with metastatic breast cancer, to help them to live as well as possible. This includes providing the treatment and care that is most likely to benefit the patient, and avoiding treatments that are unlikely to help, or that may be harmful.

Not every practice is relevant for every person diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer. The practice(s) relevant to an individual will depend on their diagnosis and situation.

HOW WAS THE STATEMENT DEVELOPED?

The Statement is based on available national and international evidence and was developed with input from a range of experts and people affected by metastatic breast cancer. The Statement has the support of key clinical colleges, cancer and consumer organisations.

USING THE STATEMENT

The Statement aims to empower people with metastatic breast cancer and their families to make informed decisions about treatment and care that are right for them. A key part of informed decision making is to talk to health professionals and ask questions about available options for treatment, care and support.

You may wish to talk to your health professionals about which practices in the Statement are most relevant for you. Each practice includes a few questions that you may find helpful to guide conversations about your treatment and care options.

MORE INFORMATION

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