

10 Not appropriate to use whole brain radiotherapy for metastatic breast cancer patients with brain metastases, without considering initial surgery or stereotactic radiosurgery.

WHAT THIS PRACTICE IS ABOUT

This practice is about treating breast cancer that has spread to the brain (brain metastases). It highlights the importance of using the most effective treatments and minimising side effects.

If breast cancer spreads to the brain, treatment is important to limit its effects on the person's quality of life.

Traditionally, brain metastases have been treated using radiotherapy to the whole brain, known as whole brain radiotherapy. This can treat the cancer cells but may also affect brain function. For some people with brain metastases, surgery or radiosurgery* may be recommended. These treatments are more precise and have fewer side effects than whole brain radiotherapy. It also allows further precise radiotherapy to be given to a different part of the brain at a later time if needed.

The choice of treatment depends on where cancer cells are in the brain and the size of the affected area. It also depends on whether cancer has spread to other parts of the body, the person's general health and their preferences. Whole brain radiotherapy may not be recommended if surgery or radiosurgery are suitable options.

WHY THIS PRACTICE MIGHT BE IMPORTANT FOR YOU

If you have brain metastases, it is important to balance the benefits and possible side effects of treatment. Treatment options include surgery, radiosurgery and whole brain radiotherapy. Surgery or radiosurgery have fewer side effects than whole brain radiotherapy.

Talk to your doctors about the different types of treatment and the possible benefits and side effects associated with each of them. This includes any impact on your day-to-day activities, such as driving. It is important for you to be informed about all of the options so that you can make the decision that's right for you.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What are my options for treatment of brain metastases?

Would surgery or radiosurgery be useful for me?

What is involved in the treatment you recommend?

What effect will my diagnosis and treatment choice have on my return to driving?

*Radiosurgery (stereotactic radiosurgery) is a very precise form of radiotherapy that uses radiation to remove tissue rather than the traditional method of using a surgical blade.

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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