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Appropriate to consider single fraction radiotherapy initially for uncomplicated painful bone metastases in patients with metastatic breast cancer, rather than routinely using radiotherapy with extended fractionation schemes (>10 fractions).

## WHAT THIS PRACTICE IS ABOUT

This practice is about using radiotherapy to treat breast cancer that has spread to the bones (bone metastases). It highlights the importance of people receiving the shortest duration of radiation therapy needed for their situation.

It is common for metastatic breast cancer to spread to the bones. Bone metastases can be painful, and this can affect a person's quality of life. Radiotherapy is used to relieve pain in some people with bone metastases. This depends on which bones are affected and what other treatments are being used.

Radiotherapy is usually given over several days or weeks at a specialist centre. In people with bone metastases, a single session with a slightly higher dose of radiotherapy has been shown to be as effective at relieving pain as a lower dose given several times. Having a single radiotherapy session (called 'single fraction radiotherapy') is more convenient and usually costs less than having multiple lower dose fractions over several days or weeks. The side effects seen with single fraction radiotherapy are similar to those seen with multiple fraction radiotherapy given over several sessions.

Sometimes radiotherapy has to be repeated to help manage pain. The need to repeat radiotherapy may be more likely after single-fraction radiotherapy.

## WHY THIS PRACTICE MIGHT BE IMPORTANT FOR YOU

If you have metastatic breast cancer, it is important that you only receive the treatments that you need. If you have bone pain caused by bone metastases, your doctors may recommend treatment with radiotherapy. A higher dose of radiotherapy given in one session is as effective for pain relief as a lower dose given over several days or weeks. This means fewer visits to the hospital for treatment and may mean that your out-of-pocket costs are lower.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

*Would radiotherapy be helpful to reduce my bone pain?*

*What is the shortest number of sessions of radiotherapy that would be effective and safe for me?*

*What are the out-of-pocket costs of having radiotherapy?*

*What impact would radiotherapy have (if any) on the use and timing of other treatments?*

## 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](http://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

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



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