WELCOME TO RADIATION ONCOLOGY
A Patient’s Guide
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WELCOME TO RADIATION ONCOLOGY QUEENSLAND

Radiation Oncology Queensland (ROQ) is working in conjunction with the Queensland Government to provide exceptional radiation therapy services to Cairns and Far North Queensland. ROQ believes in investing in the latest training and equipment to ensure it is able to deliver world class treatment.

The staff at ROQ are passionate about providing you, your family and carers with the highest quality of service in a supportive and caring environment. ROQ recognises all patients as individuals and aims to meet your specific needs, by respecting your customs, spiritual beliefs, values and dignity.

This booklet has been created to provide you with information about ROQ, to help you understand how the department operates and what you can expect from us as your radiation therapy team.
WHAT IS RADIATION THERAPY?

Radiation therapy is the use of radiation (x-rays) to damage cancer cells, whilst limiting the impact of radiation to healthy tissue. It is a painless treatment (similar to having an x-ray), that is localised and therefore only causes symptoms in the area being treated. Radiation therapy treatment can be delivered on its own, or in conjunction with other forms of treatment such as chemotherapy, hormones and surgery.

Radiation therapy treatment is usually undertaken as an outpatient service and requires you to attend daily (Monday to Friday) over a number of days/weeks. Each course of radiation therapy is unique to each person, as it is influenced by a number of factors. These factors include, but are not limited to the site and stage of the disease, pathology of the disease, a person’s age and general health.

External beam radiation therapy does not make you radioactive, and it is perfectly safe for you to be with other people, including children, throughout your treatment.

THE STAFF AT RADIATION ONCOLOGY QUEENSLAND

The radiation oncology team consists of a combination of highly trained medical professionals, who work together to make sure you receive the best care possible. This team includes:

- Radiation Oncologists
- Radiation Therapists
- Nurses
- Administration Staff
- Medical Physicists
- Allied Health staff – This includes Dieticians, Speech Pathologist, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Social workers and Psychologists. These services are provided by Queensland Health, and are available to patients.
RADIATION THERAPY: AN OVERVIEW

Radiation therapy is a complex treatment that requires a number of appointments. Below is a flow chart of the appointments you will have during your radiotherapy treatment.

INITIAL CONSULTATION

RADIATION THERAPY PLANNING

RADIATION THERAPY TREATMENT

FOLLOW UP

Your first visit to ROQ will be for your radiation therapy planning, which is discussed in the next section.

Upon arrival, please check in with our administration staff. They will require your completed registration forms (which accompany this booklet) to update your personal record on our computer system. At this time a digital face photograph will also be taken, and attached to your medical record for identification purposes.

RADIATION THERAPY: PLANNING

RADIOThERAPY PLANNING APPOINTMENT

DATE: ____________________________

TIME: ____________________________

PLEASE ARRIVE ___ MINUTES PRIOR TO YOUR APPOINTMENT TIME

__________________

WHAT TO BRING:

☐ Bring this booklet, so we can document your radiation therapy treatment start date and time.

☐ COMPLETED ‘Registration forms’ that accompany this brochure.

☐ Current Medicare card and/or DVA card.

☐ Details of current medication, including names, doses and frequency. Your GP or pharmacist can provide this for you.

☐ All x-rays, CT, MRI, bone and other radiological or nuclear medical scans and reports you have obtained during the investigation of your medical condition.
Radiation Therapy Planning is the first step to creating an individualised treatment plan, and is necessary to accurately determine the most appropriate way to treat you. This appointment has two separate parts, and may require you to be in the department for a few hours.

The first part will be in our simulation room and will take approximately 40 minutes, however this time frame may be shorter or longer depending on the complexity of your treatment.

A Radiation Therapist will collect you from the waiting room, and ask you to change into a gown. This will assist the staff to access the treatment area on your body, whilst maintaining your modesty.

Once you are changed, a Radiation Therapist will provide an explanation of this simulation session, and answer any questions you may have. During this session you will have your radiation therapy treatment position determined. This position is influenced by the area you are having treated, and may require the use of equipment to ensure accurate and reproducible positioning.

As this position needs to be accurately reproduced each day for your radiotherapy treatment, you may require permanent and non-permanent marks to assist with this process. These marks are placed on your skin with your permission, close to the area that will be treated. The permanent marks are smaller than the size of a freckle.

The second part to your appointment will be at The Cairns Base Hospital, X-ray Department (Located in Block C), where you will have a planning CT scan of the treatment area. Depending on the site you are having treated, some extra preparation may be required for the CT scan. This will be explained to you at your simulation appointment.

This planning CT scan will be slightly different to previous CT scans you may have had, as you will be positioned in your radiation therapy treatment position.
Once you have left the department your CT scan will be imported into our planning computers so a Radiation Therapist, along with your Radiation Oncologist, can create an individualised treatment plan for you. This process is complex, and requires time to complete.

When your planning appointment is complete you will be given your first radiation therapy treatment appointment. Please bring this booklet with you so we can document this appointment time. You will receive a complete list of your treatment times on the first day of your radiation therapy treatment.
WHAT TO EXPECT ON YOUR FIRST DAY OF RADIATION THERAPY TREATMENT

When you arrive on your first day, and each consecutive day, please check in with our administration staff. This is very important, as administration will alert other staff that you have arrived. You can then take a seat in the main waiting area.

There will be two discussions on this day, one with a nurse and another with a radiation therapist.

A member of our nursing staff will discuss your radiation treatment care. You are welcome to bring a family member, friend or carer with you. The Nurse will discuss, and provide written information about, the management of your skin and possible side effects you may encounter as a result of your treatment.

The side effects from radiotherapy are localised and differ between treatment sites, as well as individuals. Some people will notice minimal side effects throughout their treatment, whilst others may experience them either early or late in their treatment. Generally however, side effects usually start after the second or third week of treatment and gradually progress with treatment. Most side effects will continue after treatment, but are short term, gradually improving within 4-6 weeks after treatment has finished.

It is important to ask your Radiation Oncologist if you can use any medicines, creams or remedies other than those prescribed or recommended by us, as they can affect your radiation treatment.

A radiation therapist will discuss your radiation therapy treatment with you, providing a brief explanation of the process, what is required and what you can expect. They will also explain your radiation therapy treatment appointments and provide you with a complete list of your dates and times.
WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR RADIATION TREATMENT

Radiation therapists will be delivering your treatment, and will explain what happens during the process. You will be required to lay in the same position as designed at your radiation therapy planning appointment. The radiation therapists will assess and adjust you every day to ensure this position is replicated each day. Treatment set up usually takes about 5-10 minutes, and is often longer than the treatment time itself.

Once you are positioned you will need to stay still and relaxed. You can breathe normally, as this does not affect your treatment. The Radiation therapists will then let you know when they are exiting the room, and you will be closely monitored at all times on the closed circuit TV systems. There are also microphones present if you need to contact a staff member.

Usually X-rays will be taken before commencing your treatment to ensure you are correctly positioned. Once treatment commences, the treatment delivery may only take a few minutes. The machine will be operated from the control area outside the treatment room, so it may not be necessary for the staff to come into the room until your treatment is completed. You will not feel or see anything during your treatment, but you will hear the machine operating.

We operate on an appointment system and try to adhere to a precise timetable. However, due to the nature of the work, this is not always possible so you may find it useful to allow some extra waiting time.

DELAYS

If a machine breaks down, or if there are delays you will be informed as soon as possible. If you are worried that staff are unaware you are waiting, please speak to an administrative team member.

RADIATION THERAPY: FOLLOW UP

In your final week of radiation therapy the administration staff will organise a follow up appointment, with your Radiation Oncologist, or another specialist if you are from out of town. Please ensure you have an appointment prior to leaving the department on your last day.

We value your opinion as a patient and consumer, and welcome all your comments and suggestions. This is why we have created a confidential patient questionnaire for you to complete.
Does radiotherapy affect pregnancy?

Yes, it is important to ensure you are not pregnant or become pregnant at any time during radiotherapy, as x-rays can harm the foetus. If you think you may be pregnant at any time during your treatment, it is extremely important that you discuss this with a member of the radiation therapy team immediately. If you wish to become pregnant after your radiotherapy treatment, please discuss your fertility with your Radiation Oncologist.

Can I father children during radiotherapy?

For men having radiotherapy to their pelvic region it is advised that you do not father children during your radiation therapy treatment. Radiation therapy may damage your sperm, which can lead to birth abnormalities. If you wish to father children after your radiotherapy treatment, please discuss your fertility with your Radiation Oncologist.

Does radiotherapy make you radioactive?

External beam radiation therapy does not make you radioactive and it is perfectly safe for you to be with and around other people, including children, throughout your treatment.

Can I have my mobile phone on whilst in the department?

We request that all mobile phones be switched off before you enter the Radiation Oncology Queensland Facility and remain switched off while you are in the facility.

Can I miss a radiation therapy treatment?

It is important that you do not miss any appointments, as your individual radiation therapy treatment plan has been carefully calculated. However, if missing an appointment is unavoidable, please discuss this with your Radiation Oncologist as soon as you know.

Can I give gratuities?

Yes. ROQ’s Code of Conduct states that staff can accept perishable goods as gratuities, however, they are not permitted to accept cash, cheques, stocks or ‘financial instrument’.

How can I make a complaint?

If you feel strongly about an issue regarding your care, there is a formal complaint procedure. Please ask Administration staff for more information. Alternatively, you can arrange a meeting with the Site Manager/Head Radiation Therapy Services through one of the staff.

Is there parking available?

Yes. Paid parking is available above the Liz Plummer Cancer Care Centre. There is also parking available in the surrounding streets.

Can I access an interpreter?

ROQ provides interpreters if required. Please ask if you need this service. Alternatively you can have any medical questions answered by telephoning the Translating and Interpreting Service TIS International 13 14 50.
PATIENT TRAVEL SUBSIDY SCHEME – QLD
PTSS FORM

NB: PLEASE REFER TO YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC HOSPITAL FOR ALL INFORMATION

If your nearest treatment centre is more than 50km from your nearest local public hospital then you may be eligible for assistance towards the cost of travel and accommodation through the State Government funded scheme. This scheme may provide assistance towards the cost of travel and commercial or private accommodation. If you feel that you may be eligible for assistance, your nearest public hospital can supply you with a ‘Travel and Accommodation Assistance’ form. This form must be completed (in part) by your GP and then forwarded to your local hospital for approval before you come to us.

Please ensure you are well aware of your individual requirements. If you have any questions please contact:

• Your nearest public hospital and ask to speak to the Patient Transport Scheme clerk
• Phone the Health Services Information Line – PH (07) 3236 4833
• A copy of the PTSS application form can be downloaded from http://www.health.qld.gov.au

There are information brochures available in the main waiting area. Please ask administration staff for assistance if necessary.

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

If you live outside of the Cairns area there is a range of accommodation within walking distance to hospital, including B&B’s, self-contained units and motel accommodation. We have an extensive list available to you at the reception desk. If you require any assistant please don’t hesitate to ask on your next visit.

Building on Hope

Need assistance with accommodation?

- 14 beautifully appointed units
- Recreation area with BBQs
- Internet kiosk, library & DVDs
- Salt water pool
- Trained support co-ordinator on site
- Shuttle service to and from Cairns Base Hospital

Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20.
Cancer support and information service, staffed by nurses and health professionals.

Marylyn Mayo Lodge - 564 Mangrove Road, Woree, 4870 • P: 07 4047 5600 • E: peterdunn@cancerqld.org.au
**FALLS PREVENTION AT ROQ**

**What is falls prevention about?**

We aim to make Radiation Oncology Queensland as safe as possible for patients and visitors. It is felt by raising awareness of what may cause a fall, and providing techniques on preventing falls, the risk can be reduced or eliminated.

**What are we going to do to prevent falls?**

An assessment will be completed on your mobility. This will ensure all team members are aware of your needs and can implement correct care to reduce the risk of falls to you.

Radiation Oncology Queensland will ensure a safe environment for you at all times to reduce any risk to you and your family. All team members are aware and have had training to ensure patient safety at all times.

**What can you do to prevent yourself from the risk of falling?**

Let the health professional know if:

- you take 4 or more medicines
- you have had a fall in the last 12 months
- feel unsteady on your feet
- or are afraid of falling

A health professional will try to find the cause of your symptoms and will check your medicines. They may arrange for you to see a physiotherapist. The physiotherapist will check your balance and give you an individual exercise program.

**Here are some suggestions that can reduce the risk of falling when mobilising in the department**

When walking:

- Take your time when turning.
- Count each step to help pace yourself
- Use walking aids appropriately (do not grab for furniture)
- Have suitable footwear which is non slip and comfortable
- Learn your limits and ask for help if needed
When moving from laying (on the treatment bed) to standing:

- Sit on the bed for a minute before standing up
- Move ankles up and down to get your blood pumping
- Get your NOSE over your TOES before standing up
- Push off the bed before standing up – do not pull
- Wait a minute before walking

Please remember to tell one of the health professional(s) if any changes occur that will affect your mobility during treatment, or if you start any new medication, so they can ensure your safety during treatment.

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

The Cancer Council – Helpline
T: 13 11 20
E: helpline@cancerqld.org.au
W: www.cancerqld.org.au
A: 553 Gregory Terrace, Fortitude Valley, QLD 4006

The Cancer Council Cairns
T: (07) 4047 5500
F: (07) 3259 8478
A: 169 Aumuller Street, Bungalow, QLD 4870

St John’s Community Transport Service
T: (07) 4039 9700
F: (07) 4039 9777
A: Cnr Kamerunga & Fairweather Rds, Redlynch, QLD 4870
WHERE TO FIND ROQ CAIRNS

The department is located on the ground floor of the Liz Plummer Cancer Care Centre. The centre is on the corner of Grove and Lake Streets, with the main entrance on Grove Street. There is free parking available in the streets surrounding the foundation, or paid parking above the foundation itself. The entrance to the car park is off Digger St.