

Palliative care

Palliative care does not aim to cure a cancer, it is used to help shrink, slow down the growth, or control symptoms of an advanced stage tumour. It may also be used to control the symptoms of a cancer that has spread to give a patient a better quality of life.

Not all cancers respond well to radiotherapy and sometimes other treatments such as surgery, chemotherapy, hormone therapy or biological therapy may be more appropriate. An oncologist will decide if radiotherapy will be of benefit to a patient and whether radiotherapy is suitable.

Uses for palliative care

Palliative care is used for various reasons including to:

- Shrink a tumour to relieve pressure.
- Treat a spinal cord compression.
- Relieve bone pain.
- Relieve symptoms of brain metastasis.
- Relieve symptoms of lung metastasis.
- Control and reduce bleeding in ulcerating tumours.

It can sometimes be uncomfortable for patients to lie on a hard couch to receive palliative radiotherapy, however, the treatment only takes a few minutes and every effort is made to make the patient as comfortable as possible. The course is usually very short - often only one or two treatments over a few days.

A few examples of treatments utilised in palliative care are:

Radiotherapy

Chemotherapy

Surgery

Psychological care

Dietary care

Pain management

Hospice