

The Multidisciplinary Team

This factsheet is about the Multidisciplinary Team – the people involved in your care.

Who are the members of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)?

The members of the MDT for both the Head and Neck Unit and Thyroid Unit are experts at treating and managing head, neck and thyroid cancer. They are involved with your investigations, diagnosis and treatment options, and supportive care. The members include head and neck surgeons, clinical oncologists, plastic surgeons, radiologists and pathologists, as well as nurse specialists and other allied health professionals.

Clinical nurse specialist: a specialist nurse who will provide you with information about your cancer and its treatment. They will also provide support for you and your family throughout your treatment and follow up.

Clinical oncologist: a doctor who specialises in the treatment of cancer with radiotherapy treatments (high energy x-rays). Most clinical oncologists will also prescribe chemotherapy (anti-cancer drugs).

Dietitian: a healthcare professional who provides advice on nutrition. They work particularly closely with individuals that have difficulties eating and drinking during and after treatment.

Endocrinologist: a medical doctor who specialises in the endocrine system, its diseases, and its specific secretions known as hormones.

Head and neck surgeon: a surgeon who is specialised in treating cancers of the head, neck and thyroid.

Histopathologist and cytopathologist: specialist doctors who examine body tissues and organs under the microscope.

Key worker: your key worker acts as a point of contact for you and your family throughout your treatment. Usually this will be a specialist nurse or a research nurse if you are taking part in a clinical trial.

Lymphoedema therapist: a specialist healthcare professional who can advise on the management of any swelling which may develop as a result of treatment for head and neck cancers.

Occupational therapist: a healthcare professional who manages functional difficulties aiming to



maximise independence. They can help rehabilitate patients and provide equipment such as wheelchairs and home adaptations.

Physiotherapist: a healthcare professional who provides advice and support with movement and exercise.

Plastic surgeon: a surgeon who operates with the head and neck surgeons and plans/performs reconstructive surgery.

Radiologist: a doctor who specialises in using x-ray and other imaging scans in the diagnosis and management of disease.

Research nurse: a nurse who helps run clinical trials and provides specific information and support to patients involved in those trials.

Speech and language therapist: a healthcare professional who manages communication and swallowing disorders following treatment. They work particularly closely with those who have had a laryngectomy.

Why does the MDT meet?

The purpose of the MDT is to plan treatment for patients with head and neck or thyroid cancer. They meet weekly and each patient's case history, scans, x-rays and any other test results are reviewed and discussed by the different specialists. An individual treatment plan is then recommended for each patient. The benefit of the MDT is that all the specialists are together, the different treatment options are discussed and a final joint decision is made by them all.

When will I be told of the outcome of the MDT discussion?

You will be told of the outcome of the MDT by one of the members of the team, usually at your outpatient's appointment. Your GP will also be informed.

Will I have the opportunity to discuss the recommendation with my specialist?

You will certainly be able to discuss this with your specialist. You will also be given plenty of time to ask for further information or to discuss any concerns which you may have with either your doctor or the nurse specialist.

Do I have to accept the treatment plan?

No, this is your decision and your consent is required before any treatment starts. It is, however, the treatment which the specialists think would be most appropriate for you. We will discuss other options with you and give you time to consider these further and make a final decision.

What if I have more questions?

You are welcome to ask any questions you have about your treatment or care at any time. You may find it useful to keep a notebook handy to jot down questions as you think of them. The team will be happy to try to answer any questions you have.

Is there someone from the MDT who I can contact for more information and support?

Yes. You will have a key worker, which is usually the nurse specialist - they will give you their contact details so you can contact them for further information and advice.

