

Interventional Radiology

What is Interventional Radiology?

Interventional radiology (often shortened to 'IR') is a branch of medicine. Medical images including X-ray, ultrasound, and computed tomography (CT) are used to guide minimally invasive 'pinhole' procedures. These procedures diagnose or treat medical conditions using a needle, wire, or tube (catheter). Many IR procedures are lifesaving and avoid the need for open surgery.

What are the benefits of Interventional Radiology?

Most of our procedures are low risk, with minimal pain and a short recovery period.

What is Interventional Radiology used for at The Royal Marsden?

We perform both planned and emergency procedures. We can:

- Take samples of tissue to diagnose cancer (biopsy)
- Relieve blockages caused by cancer (eg. to the kidneys, bile ducts, bowel and blood vessels)
- Drain fluid or pus
- Place feeding tubes
- Treat cancer using:
 - Directly placed special needles into tumours to destroy them (ablation)
 - Small particles to block their blood supply and destroy them (embolisation)

We currently perform nearly 2000 procedures per year in our department, meaning patients with cancer will often be seen by our team at some stage. We do not have our own clinics or wards, so patients may not always know our role. Separate publications on individual procedures are available in the [online patient information library](#).

Who makes up our team?

- Interventional Radiologist

A highly skilled clinical doctor who performs image-guided procedures. They also interpret the imaging to plan and monitor response to treatments.

- Nurses

IR nurses care for patients throughout their time in the department. They ensure patients are ready for procedures, give necessary medication and assist doctors during the procedure.

- Radiographers

Radiographers are specialists in medical images, providing imaging control for procedures.

- Anaesthetic team

Most procedures are performed with sedation. However, general anaesthesia is sometimes needed for more painful procedures, particularly ablation.





Research at The Royal Marsden

Many of our procedures are cutting-edge and require further work to establish best use.

Our team leads pioneering research to improve the care we provide for patients. For example, we established the first CT guided robot in the UK, which helps us target tumours more accurately.

We wouldn't be able to carry out our life-saving research without patients like you.

Find us at:

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The Royal Marsden
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London SW3 6JJ

Contact details

The Interventional Radiology Team: 020 7808 2572

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

(Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week)

More information about specific procedures can be found via the [online patient information library](#).

