

Oncology Services Group COVID-19 Family Information Update – 30 March 2020



Children's Health Queensland
Hospital and Health Service

Understandably you and your family are anxious as we face the COVID19 pandemic, however we wish to reassure you again that our priority will be to maintain services for you and your child. The priority for the Oncology Service is to continue treatment while maximising the safety of our patients, families and staff. This update also addresses some specific queries and concerns that families have expressed recently.

Social distancing by minimising contact with others at work and in the community, along with careful attention to hand hygiene are the most effective measures to prevent spread of COVID19. One thing we would like to emphasise is that if your child has respiratory tract infection symptoms please contact your liaison nurse / CNC before coming to the hospital for scheduled appointments so that appropriate advice and precautions can be implemented. Patients who are unwell should present to the Emergency Department and identify themselves as Oncology patients.

Continuity of treatment

On treatment, inpatient and outpatient activities will continue as normal. However, we ask that you comply with the hospital visitor policy restricting the number of parent/caregivers that will be able to accompany your child. Where appropriate, we will discuss with families the possibility of having procedures such as line cares and blood collections performed via Hospital in the Home or in community pathology services. Both QML and S&N have a list of COVID-19 testing centres on their web sites.

The follow up of off treatment patients will occur as clinically indicated. This may be as a face-to-face consultation or appointments via telehealth (videoconferencing coordinated between Queensland Health facilities), videoconferencing by other platforms or by telephone. In some instances, reassessment imaging maybe performed at regional hospitals to avoid unnecessary travel. This needs to be discussed between your consultant and your regional centre. Our consultants are working through their upcoming appointments and reviewing the circumstances of each patient. On treatment and off treatment families will be notified as soon as possible regarding how their next appointment will be conducted.

Oncology Outpatients / Day therapy patients

- Chemotherapy and reviews for on treatment patients continue.
- 5c Theatre lists continue for patients on treatment.
- The 5c waiting room layout has been re-arranged to provide appropriate distancing between patients and families attending clinic including placing extra chairs in the BMT waiting area.

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- QCH staff will not be attending forthcoming oncology and haematology/haemophilia clinics in regional areas. Patient reviews will continue with a combination of regional and telehealth review.
- The immunisation clinic at QCH continues to operate at the moment. Please ask your consultant if you have questions about your child's immunisation schedule.

Oncology inpatients

Inpatient treatment of Oncology patients will remain a QCH priority. Strategies continue to maximise the efficiency of bed use, including early discharge and chemotherapy go-aheads early in the day.

- Consideration will be given to utilise home support services through Hospital in the Home for antibiotics, post hydration and low risk febrile neutropenia.
- The Blood and Marrow Transplant Service continues to operate.
- The importance of strict infection control measures including hand hygiene, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves when required, are well understood and practised by staff of the Oncology Service Group. Unnecessary use of PPE is to be avoided.
- Where it does not interfere with the care of the patient, staff are practicing social distancing and limiting the number of staff that need to be in a patient's room.
- We are confident that we have enough medication and other supplies at this time.
- Urgent surgical procedures for Oncology patients will continue as required. There may be changes with respect to the removal of central lines after treatment is completed.
- As mentioned QCH has introduced strict visitor restrictions to protect patients and staff. For inpatients, only 2 caregivers (and only one overnight) are permitted within a 24-hour period. For outpatients we ask that only one parent/carer accompany the patient. Where possible siblings should not visit the hospital. Please find alternative childcare arrangements while your child is an inpatient. We understand that this may be difficult for some families, but it is most important to minimise the risk of community acquired coronavirus in the hospital. Currently volunteer services in the hospital are also suspended.

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Emergency presentations for patients in outer metropolitan Brisbane

For children residing in outer metropolitan Brisbane areas, specifically if your local hospital is Caboolture, Prince Charles, Ipswich, Logan, Redlands or Redcliffe Hospital please note:

- Many regional and outer metropolitan hospitals are facing increasing activity due to COVID-19. We recommend that where possible you bring your child directly to the Queensland Children's Hospital (QCH) Emergency Department (ED) for medical problems outside of working hours (Monday to Friday 8am-4pm). We have made arrangements with the QCH ED team to ensure that Oncology patients will be continue to be provided with the appropriate care.
- During working hours, please call 5c for advice on 3068 2060. If you are concerned that your child is critically unwell at any point, please call the Queensland Ambulance Service on 000, for your child to be brought to your closest hospital for stabilisation prior to transfer to QCH.
- Note this guidance excludes families residing in the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast University Hospital catchments due to the distance from QCH. For these areas, please continue to bring your child to the closest hospital for any concerns requiring medical assessment.

Family support and communication

- Parent support groups have been cancelled or will be run via webinars.
- The Oncology Family Forum scheduled for May is cancelled
- The QCH School is leaving packs with ward receptionists and distributing online content.
- The first of a series of information sheets was sent out to families during the week of 18 March, with an update on 25 March. We will continue to provide you with regular email updates as information comes to hand. To update your email contacts for this information, contact QPPHON@health.qld.gov.au.
- We thank families for their patience in communicating with liaison nurses / CNCs during this time. As you will understand, CNCs continue to care for new and on treatment families, as well as fielding many calls and emails from concerned oncology families. They are doing their best to prioritise and respond to these as soon as possible.

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- Email and text communication should not be utilised for urgent clinical concerns. In this case, families should call 5c (Phone 3068 2060; 0730-1700 Mon-Fri) or 11b (Ph 3068 2010; 24 hours, 7 days) as usual.
- GPs are sent discharge summaries and have access to hospital electronic medical record and can see records & results for each patient.

We hope this information has answered some of your queries and concerns. Stay safe and well, and we will continue to provide updates as much as possible.

Oncology Services Group
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