

Open access follow-up (OAFU) for prostate cancer

Information for GPs

Introduction

We are sending you this leaflet because one of your patients who has received treatment for prostate cancer at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust is now starting on the open access follow-up (OAFU) programme.

What is OAFU?

OAFU is a new type of aftercare service used at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust for patients who have received primary treatment for prostate cancer. Routine follow-up appointments are replaced with an arrangement that allows patients and their GPs to report any worries, concerns or symptoms of possible progressive disease via a dedicated helpline with a response within 24 working hours if no-one is available to respond immediately. If we think that the patient needs to be seen, they will be offered an appointment within two weeks.

Why have you introduced OAFU?

OAFU provides a better service for patients. Many people find that routine follow-up appointments make them anxious and can take up a lot of time. Instead, the dedicated OAFU helpline gives patients and their GPs quick access to the prostate services medical team who will organise hospital appointments as required. This type of follow-up service has been used successfully in many hospitals across the country for a number of years.

What information will my patient be given?

Your patient will have a consultation with a specialist prostate nurse during which the OAFU service and helpline will be explained. The nurse will also cover the following topics:

- the patient's diagnosis and treatment
- their medication and possible side effects
- the arrangements for follow-up tests, such as regular PSA blood tests, and the process for getting the results
- how to be body and prostate aware
- related health, lifestyle and wellbeing advice
- sources of further help and support
- the signs and symptoms to look out for and report via the helpline that might indicate a return or spread of the disease

Will my patient still be able to access the prostate service?

Patients and their GPs can access the prostate service by telephoning or emailing the dedicated OAFU helpline if they have any aftercare-related concerns or questions.

OAFU telephone helpline: **020 3312 2348**

The telephone helpline is monitored between 09.00 and 17.00 from Monday to Friday. If no-one is available to answer immediately, you can leave a message.

OAFU email address: **ICHC-tr.openaccessprostate@nhs.net**

Please note that, in order to maintain patient confidentiality, emails from GPs must be sent from nhs.net accounts and emails from patients will be responded to by telephone.

All telephone messages and emails will be responded to within 24 working hours. If we think that the patient should be seen in clinic or have any diagnostic tests, they will be offered an appointment within two weeks. You will be notified about any appointments when they are made.

What is expected of me?

It is unlikely that you will need to change the way that you care for your patients who have received treatment for prostate cancer. The enclosed letter and treatment summary gives details of the medication that you will need to continue to prescribe and the duration, as well as any additional tests that you may need to arrange for them. Please keep this for your records. Your patient also has a copy of this information.

If your patient has any problems or if there is any proposed change in their medication, these will be discussed at the dedicated OAFU MDT. You will be informed in writing of any changes to their treatment or medication.

Will my patient continue to have routine PSA tests?

Unless it has been otherwise specified in the enclosed documents, your patient will need to have regular PSA tests for at least five years after their treatment. The PSA tests will be arranged by the hospital and the results will be sent to you and your patient by post within two to three weeks of the test.

Signs and symptoms to report

The following list is a reminder of the signs and symptoms to keep in mind when caring for patients who have had treatment for prostate cancer. These symptoms could indicate a return or spread of the disease and need further investigation:

- persistent aches and pains in bones, lasting more than one week
- swelling in legs
- unexplained weight loss
- pain when urinating
- change in controlling and passing of urine
- passing blood in urine or faeces
- numbness or pins and needles in legs or arms that does not go away
- weakness in arms or legs, difficulty in standing or walking
- back pain which may move to the lower back or legs

If your patient experiences any of these symptoms, they should contact the OAFU helpline (see details on page 2) without delay or you can do so on their behalf.

How can I find out more about OAFU?

If you would like more information about the OAFU service, please get in touch via the helpline.



This service is supported by Imperial College Health Charity. We provide funding for projects that improve patient experience in North West London. If you would like to know more about our fantastic work or make a donation please visit our website at www.imperialcharity.org.uk