



## **Gynaecologic Brachytherapy Information Sheet**

### **Introduction**

Brachytherapy is of internal radiotherapy involving the placement of radioactive substance inside patient's body, to deliver a high dose of radiation to the tumor in a short distance to destroy cancer cell. Only small amount of radiation travels beyond the tumor, thus reducing damage to neighboring normal tissues and organs. The oncologist will propose suitable treatment regimens based on treatment objectives, patient's medical history and conditions.

### **Procedure**

1. Brachytherapy applicators will be placed inside patient's body in proximity to the tumour by the oncologist. The procedure might take place directly in the treatment room, or in the operation theatre if regional or general anesthesia is required.
2. In some cases, computed tomography or magnetic resonance imaging may be needed to confirm and adjust the applicator location, also to calculate radiation dose distribution.
3. With the applicator in place, patient will receive brachytherapy in a specialized treatment room.
4. The radioactive source will be remotely controlled and transferred into the applicator.
5. The treatment usually takes several minutes. The actual treatment time depends on the radioactive source and the treatment plan.
6. Patient will be staying in the treatment room alone until the treatment is completed, while medical and nursing staff will closely monitor patient's condition through the CCTV. Patient can press the alarm or raise hand for immediate medical attention if he/she feels unwell during the treatment.
7. When the treatment is completed, radioactive source will be retrieved automatically and the doctor will remove the applicator. No radioactive substance would be left inside patient's body.
8. Patient can leave the hospital directly or be transferred back to ward when his/her condition becomes stable.

### **Before the Treatment**

- The treatment regime for brachytherapy varies with each individual, patients are advised to discuss with their doctors for treatment details and possible side effects.
- Patient must give consent for brachytherapy prior to undergoing any related procedure.
- The anesthesiologist will explain the procedure and risk when regional or general anesthesia is needed for brachytherapy. Patient is required to sign related consent form.

### **After the Treatment**

- Patient may feel tired after brachytherapy or anesthesia, hence can consider asking family or friends to accompany him/her leaving the hospital

#### **Patient's Label**

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital No: \_\_\_\_\_

Episode No: \_\_\_\_\_



### General risk and side effects

Some common side effects are stated below. Each patient reacts differently to the treatment, thus may experience different side effects to a varying degree of severity

- Bleeding or bacterial infection
- Discomfort and pain
- Effect of radiation to normal tissue

### Side effects specific to gynaecologic brachytherapy

#### Short term side effects

- Vaginal irritation, such as itchiness, burning sensation, discharge or bleeding
- Bladder and urethral inflammation causing urinary frequency, pain or bleeding during urination
- Rectal and anal inflammation causing pain, irritation, mucous discharge and sometimes bleeding
- Vaginal laceration causing pain, inflammation and necrosis (Rare)
- Rupture of the uterus (Rare)

#### Long term side effects

- Dryness and narrowing of the vagina
- Chronic bowel inflammation causing diarrhea and chronic abdominal pain (Rare)
- Chronic bladder inflammation causing pain upon urinary or blood in urine

### Points for attention

- Radiotherapy can cause teratogenicity. Therefore, both male and female patients should take contraceptive measures during radiotherapy
- Please inform doctor and radiotherapists if you have undergone radiotherapy. Additional radiation on previous treatment site might cause severe complications.
- Radiotherapy may affect the function of your pacemaker. Please inform our staff if you have a cardiac pacemaker
- Consult doctor or medical staff for any illness. Doctor will provide patients with appropriate measures to alleviate side effects
- Some common and potential severe side effects are discussed above. Each patient reacts differently and may experience none, some, or all of the complications to a varying degree of severity. Please consult doctor for treatment side effects related to individual patient condition.

### Disclaimer

This leaflet only provides general information pertaining to this operation / procedure. While common risks and complications are described, the list is not exhaustive, and the degree of risk could also vary between patients. Please contact your doctor for detailed information and specific enquiry.

### Reference

HA Smart Patients, Cancer Research UK

Patient's Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

### Patient's Label

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital No: \_\_\_\_\_

Episode No: \_\_\_\_\_