

Cancer of the Unknown Primary

Acute Oncology Service Patient Information Leaflet



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If you'd like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this leaflet then please call:

01253 955588

Our Four Values:

People Centred

Positive

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Cancers of Unknown Primary (CUP) affect 3 to 5% of people with cancer. A variety of investigations are likely to have been performed before a diagnosis of CUP can be made.

What is cancer of unknown primary?

Cancer of unknown primary (CUP) is a term used when a person is diagnosed with cancer that has spread within the body but the place in the body where the cancer started (the primary site) cannot be found, even after all suitable tests have been carried out.

Why can't the primary cancer be found?

There are many reasons why the primary cancer cannot be found such as:

It may be too small to be seen on a scan. It may have disappeared although it has already spread.

This can happen because it was unable to maintain its own blood supply or your immune system may have destroyed the cancer in the primary site but not the cancer that has spread to other areas of the body.

What is the treatment for cancer of unknown primary?

The most common treatments are chemotherapy, radiotherapy and hormonal therapy but will depend on your unique situation. Treatment for most cancers of unknown primary may help control the disease but will not cure it.

There are many different types of CUP and many possible treatments. Because of this diagnosis may take longer to be made. Finding out as much as we can about where the cancer may have come from helps to make treatment as effective as possible.

Treatment for CUP

After the investigations, if the primary site of the cancer is found you will be referred to a consultant who specialises in that area. They will take over your ongoing care and treatment.

If the primary cancer is not found, then cancer of unknown primary (CUP) is confirmed. Even though the primary site has not been identified, tests may suggest possible places where the cancer may have started and your consultant can offer treatment based on this information.

Treatment for CUP may help to control the disease for some time but does not offer a cure. The CUP team will consider where your secondary cancer is, whether you are likely to benefit from treatment and whether you are well enough to manage any treatment side effects.

Support for people diagnosed with CUP

Being diagnosed with cancer of unknown primary can be particularly difficult because of the uncertainty surrounding it. Sometimes it may be hard to make sense of what is happening to you and can be difficult to explain to other people. Getting to the point of diagnosis may have been lengthy and exhausting.

As well as coping with this you may have difficulty dealing with symptoms of the disease or the treatment itself.

You will be supported throughout your care by the CUP team. You will have a keyworker. They offer support to you and your family or carers.

Contact details

Key worker

Tel 01253 957114

or 01253 300000 and ask for bleep 679

.....@bfwhospitals.nhs.uk

Key worker

Tel 01253 957114

or 01253 300000 and ask for bleep 886

.....@bfwhospitals.nhs.uk

Useful Information

Macmillan Cancer Support
www.macmillan.org.uk

CancerHelp UK (patient information website
of Cancer Research UK)
www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Cancer of Unknown Primary(CUP)
Foundation-Jo's friends
www.cupfoundjo.org

Useful contact details

Clinical Nurse Specialists

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

Telephone:

01253 957114

or

01253 300000 please ask for Bleep 679 or 886

Hospital Switchboard: **01253 300000**

Patient Relations Department

The Patient Relations Department offer impartial advice and deal with any concerns or complaints the Trust receives. You can contact them via:

Tel: **01253 955589**

email: **patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk**

You can also write to us at:

Patient Relations Department, Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Whinney Heys Road, Blackpool FY3 8NR

Further information is available on our website:

www.bfwh.nhs.uk

References

This leaflet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from:

Policy Co-ordinator/Archivist 01253 953397

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