

News release

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3000th Patient undergoes Brachytherapy at Leeds Teaching Hospitals, the UK's pioneer centre for this 'unsung' prostate cancer treatment

The Leeds Cancer Centre at St James's University Hospital today saw its 3000th patient undergo LDR brachytherapy to treat prostate cancer. Brachytherapy in the UK was pioneered at Leeds in 1995, and the centre has treated more patients this way than any other hospital in the country.

LDR brachytherapy is a targeted form of internal radiotherapy and an effective, minimally invasive treatment for prostate cancer with significant quality of life benefits over alternative treatments such as surgery and chemotherapy.^{1,2,3} However, it is frequently overlooked as a treatment option, because the standard NHS route for patients with suspected prostate cancer is from the GP to the surgeon.

Dr Ann Henry, Consultant at St James's Institute of Oncology, Leeds, and Associate Professor in Clinical Oncology at Leeds University comments: "You could call low dose rate brachytherapy the 'unsung hero' of prostate cancer treatment, because the standard NHS referral routes to a surgeon mean that some patients who are suited to receive the treatment don't really consider it as an option."

Leeds' 3000th patient is 62 year old Edward Boynton, who runs the Nag's Head at Pickhill, near Thirsk. He explains: "When my GP referred me to a specialist about my prostate after a routine health check, I was straight on the phone to a friend who is a retired doctor. He asked me what the Gleason reading was and advised me to ask about seed brachytherapy as an option which would least disrupt my life. I was delighted when they told me I was a suitable candidate to have the procedure and I'm hoping to be back at work within a day or so."

Patients with suspected prostate cancer are usually referred by their GP to a surgeon. Some will need surgery to remove the prostate and/ or chemotherapy, which may mean taking weeks out of 'normal life' and can permanently damage sexual and bladder function. However, many patients are suitable for LDR brachytherapy, a one-stop treatment – usually day surgery – with a much lower risk of sexual and bladder problems.

Brachytherapy is a type of radiotherapy which is used to treat many different cancers. Radiotherapy kills cancer cells with radiation and can be delivered in two ways: External Beam Radiotherapy (EBRT), which is also sometimes used in the treatment of prostate cancer, and Brachytherapy, which is most frequently used in gynaecological, prostate, breast, oesophagus, rectal and skin cancers.

EBRT delivers the radiation from outside the body while brachytherapy is more targeted to the cancer itself. Low dose rate (LDR) brachytherapy involves implanting tiny radioactive seeds internally, in- or alongside the tumour tissue. This targeted approach reduces the risk of damage to healthy tissue. LDR brachytherapy for prostate cancer may also be called 'internal radiotherapy' or 'permanent seed brachytherapy'.

Treatments choices for cancer ultimately depend on the type and location of cancer as well as patient preferences. Options are usually discussed with the specialist to which a patient is referred to find the best solution for that individual.

The Leeds Cancer Centre provides cancer care to the local population of Leeds and specialist treatments to 2.7 million people living in Yorkshire. Highly specialised care is also available for people who have rarer cancers and live in the North of England. Treatments include surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

The team at Leeds was the first in the UK to deliver brachytherapy in 1995 and their original patient is still alive today. In 2014, they continue to achieve and record excellent results for patients who have prostate cancer and have gone on to share their expertise by training many of those clinicians who have set up other UK centres for LDR brachytherapy.

Chemotherapy and radiotherapy – including LDR brachytherapy – are provided on the St James's University Hospital site by the St James's Institute of Oncology, which is located in the purpose-built Bexley Wing. The Institute also has a well-respected research programme and a high class reputation for its work in research trials. Surgical cancer care is delivered in a number of different areas of St James's University Hospital, including Bexley Wing and also at Seacroft Hospital, Chapel Allerton Hospital and the Leeds General Infirmary.

As well as providing excellent clinical care, Leeds Cancer Centre offers a wide range of supportive care services, including complementary therapies and financial advice. Many of these can be accessed through the Leeds Cancer Support team, based at the Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

BXTAccelyon is a privately-owned company that delivers high quality products for brachytherapy treatment with expertise and reliability. They have supported this news release with the aim of raising the profile of LDR Brachytherapy as a sometimes over-looked treatment option for certain patients with prostate cancer.

¹ Grimm P et al. BJU International 2012; 109, supplement 1: 22-29

² Malcolm JB et al. Journal of Urology 2010; 183: 1822-29

³ Chen RC et al. J Clin Oncol 2009; 27: 3916-22