



The All Party Parliamentary Group for Radiotherapy

Press Release

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APPG RT publishes mini-inquiry into the impacts of COVID-19 on cancer services

A mini inquiry published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Radiotherapy today, has found that despite radiotherapy offering potential to prevent avoidable cancer deaths, services are being limited, delayed and cancelled. The findings, which have been presented to the Health Select Committee, found that unless urgent and co-ordinated action is taken by the Government, in the form of a National Taskforce, the UK will lose more lives from cancer, as a result of the understandable focus on Covid-19, than we are able to save from the virus.

Radiotherapy is needed by 1 in 4 of us at some point in our lives and is necessary in 4 out of 10 cancer cures. While surgical options for cancer treatment are decreased, because of Intensive Care capacity, and chemotherapy reduced due to impacts on the immune system, radiotherapy provides an option to prevent avoidable cancer deaths without detracting from the overall Covid-19 effort. However, despite radiotherapy being one of the safest cancer treatments at this time, the inquiry has found services are being constrained and limited.

A flash survey of radiotherapy demonstrated a concerning lack of full and appropriate PPE, delays and disruptions to treatments and a failure to fully utilise capacity of advanced radiotherapy machines.

A full analysis of the survey and mini-inquiry can be found here:

<https://www.appgrt.co.uk/publications>

The survey findings include:

- Only **31%** of front-line staff felt they had access to full and appropriate levels of PPE
- 61% reported between **21-60%** of patients had their radiotherapy treatment disrupted and 65% of responders were concerned or extremely concerned.
- **36%** were not able to introduce advanced radiotherapy with SABR to shorten treatment and **24%** reported poor or very poor IT.
- Unused machine capacity has increased **5- fold**, with some centres reporting 6 hours per day spare machine

- 97% of respondents said that at least some prostate radiotherapy was cancelled, the average was 56% of patients cancelled, 3% said 0 cancellations and 20% said 100%. The time delay being planned ranged from **2-6 months**
- **24%** felt radiotherapy services were severely undervalued and **41%** undervalued by senior policy makers in Government and the NHS
- **38%** felt that the Government had no understanding of the effect of the current situation in radiotherapy on cancer patients and **51%** no understanding on the effect on the radiotherapy workforce