

Clinical Commissioning Policy: Proton Beam Therapy for Cancer of the Prostate

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Contact Details for further information	england.specialisedcommissioning@nhs.net

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Clinical Commissioning Policy: Proton Beam Therapy for Cancer of the Prostate

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**Prepared by NHS England Specialised Services Clinical Reference Group for
Radiotherapy**

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Policy Statement

NHS England will not routinely commission proton beam therapy for cancer of the prostate in accordance with the criteria outlined in this document. In creating this policy NHS England has reviewed this clinical condition and the options for its treatment. It has considered the place of this treatment in current clinical practice, whether scientific research has shown the treatment to be of benefit to patients, (including how any benefit is balanced against possible risks) and whether its use represents the best use of NHS resources. This policy document outlines the arrangements for funding of this treatment for the population in England.

Equality Statement

Throughout the production of this document, due regard has been given to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic (as cited in under the Equality Act 2010) and those who do not share it.

Plain Language Summary

About prostate cancer

Prostate cancer, called cancer of the 'prostate gland', is a common cancer in men. It can be cured by treatment targeted at the prostate gland alone – where the cancer has not spread to other parts of the body.

About the current treatment

Conventional radiotherapy is one of the most effective treatments for prostate cancer that has not spread to other parts of the body. When this treatment is delivered using the most modern techniques, there are very low rates of side effects.

About the new treatment

Proton Beam Therapy is relatively new type of radiotherapy which uses charged particles called 'protons' instead of 'photons' (X- Rays). This has some advantages over conventional radiotherapy in certain groups of patients, such as young children, or where the cancer is close to a critical part of the body, such as an organ. This is

because it targets the cancer and does not affect the surrounding healthy tissues and the rest of the patient.

However, for other groups of patients or types of cancer, there has been little evidence of significantly improved treatment benefits, such as better cancer control and reduced side effects, than compared to conventional treatment.

What we have decided

NHS England has carefully reviewed the evidence to treat prostate cancer with Proton Beam Therapy. We have concluded that there is not enough evidence to make the treatment available at this time.

1 Introduction

This document describes the evidence that has been considered by NHS England in formulating a proposal to not routinely commission Proton Beam Therapy for Prostatic Cancer.

Radiotherapy is a highly effective therapy for localised Cancer of the Prostate. There are a series of localised treatment options including active monitoring, radical prostatectomy (surgery to remove the prostate), conventional radiotherapy and brachytherapy (where small radioactive seeds or implants are placed into the prostate gland). Proton Beam Radiotherapy is a new potential alternative to conventional radiotherapy. It is available in some other countries.

2 Definitions

Cancer of the Prostate: is the most common cancer in men. Where the cancer is only in the prostate gland and has not spread into the surrounding tissues or to other parts of the body, it is also called localised prostate cancer.

Proton Beam Radiotherapy (PBT): is the use of high-energy proton beams used instead of conventional X-Rays to treat cancer. It is capable of being precisely targeted using imaging to match a high dose treatment volume to the shape and position of the tumour area within the body. Because of its characteristic properties to stop at a precise depth in tissue with no dose beyond that point, it can deliver treatment with significantly reduced volumes of unnecessarily irradiated normal tissues. It is given in a number of daily treatments, or fractions, over several weeks. PBT is significantly more expensive than conventional radiotherapy

Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT): IMRT is an advanced form of conventional radiotherapy given from outside the body to target tumours inside the body. It uses many small beams of varying strength to shape the dose of radiation to match the tumour and is very precise. By doing this it allows a reduction of radiation dose to healthy surrounding tissues and so reduces late side effects of treatment.

Image Guided Radiotherapy (IGRT): IGRT is the way radiotherapy is targeted precisely within the body. Images from different types of scan such as CT and MRI are used to plan where the tumour and surrounding normal health tissues are situated and are used to assist in delivering the treatment. Imaging devices mounted on the radiotherapy equipment can also match the plan to the position of the patient and tumour each day during treatment to ensure the treatment is delivered accurately.

PSA: One of the best indicators of disease activity in patients with prostate cancer is the measurement of a protein produced by the prostate called Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) in the blood. Where this biochemical level remains low after treatment it correlates with local control of the disease. Where it rises this is known as biochemical failure and is a marker of local progression of the disease.

3 Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to consider the NHS England commissioning position on the use of Proton Beam Therapy for Cancer of the Prostate

The objectives were to set out the NHS England commissioning position on the use of Proton Beam Therapy for Cancer of the Prostate

4 Epidemiology and Needs Assessment

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men affecting 1 in 12 men, and makes up 26% of all male cancer diagnoses in England. In 2011, 35,567 men were diagnosed with prostate cancer, with a corresponding Age Standardised Rate (ASR) of 106.7 per 100,000 population (95% Confidence Interval 105.6-107.8). There were 9,123 deaths from prostate cancer in 2011 in England, translating to a mortality rate of 23.8 per 100,000 population (95% Confidence Interval 23.3-24.4) (ONS, 2014).

Prostate cancer is predominantly a disease of older men (aged 65–79 years) but around 25% of cases occur in men below the age of 65. Increased incidence and mortality is observed in men of black African or Caribbean family origin compared with white Caucasian men (NICE, 2014).

Treatment for localised prostate cancer is one of the most common curative indications for conventional radiotherapy in the UK. Conventional radiotherapy with IMRT and IGRT is very precise and considered standard care. In 2014/15 15,710 treatment episodes were delivered in England. Current NICE guidance recommends 37 daily treatment fractions for prostate radiotherapy.

5 Evidence Base

NHS England has concluded that there is not sufficient evidence to support a proposal for the routine commissioning of this treatment for the indication.

A full evidence search was conducted in November 2014. A further search was conducted in March 2016. No further evidence relevant to the questions addressed in the original evidence review was found.

Clinical effectiveness

A systematic review which covered a variety of potential indications for proton beam therapy included three randomised controlled trials of proton beam therapy for prostate cancer:

- The first trial randomised participants between proton beam therapy and photon treatment. There were no significant differences in overall survival, disease-specific survival, total recurrence-free survival or local control between the two arms.
- The second trial randomised participants between two doses of proton beam therapy. Overall survival was similar for the two groups, but rates of biochemical failure were higher for the low dose group, and more of these patients subsequently required androgen deprivation [the use of drugs to reduce the circulating levels of male hormones in association with radiotherapy is now accepted as a standard of care in some patient groups to achieve best clinical outcomes] in association with radiotherapy for recurrence.
- The third trial compared five different proton beam therapy fractionation and dose regimes. Rates of biochemical failure were similar in the five arms.

- The review also included three non-randomised studies
 - The first study reported quality-of-life data from men who had received either proton beam therapy or IMRT. There were no differences for most measures, but the men who received proton beam therapy had more rectal urgency and frequent bowel movements.
 - The second study compared men who had received IMRT, proton beam therapy and three-dimensional conformal (an older method of delivering radiotherapy that accurately shapes the radiotherapy dose to the tumour) photon radiotherapy. Each treatment had a different pattern of adverse effects, with none emerging as safer.
 - The third study reported no significant differences in further cancer treatment, urinary incontinence, erectile dysfunction or hip fracture in men who had received IMRT and proton beam therapy. Those who had proton beam therapy were more likely to experience gastrointestinal morbidity.
- One further controlled study which reported no differences in gastrointestinal or genitourinary late side effects between men treated with proton beam therapy and intensity-modulated photon radiotherapy.

Cost effectiveness

A systematic review of the cost effectiveness of radiotherapy for prostate cancer included two analyses:

- The first reported a comparison of proton beam therapy and IMRT. The authors estimated that the incremental cost per quality-adjusted life year of proton beam therapy was US\$63,578 (£42,400) for a man of 70 years and US\$55,726 (£37,200) for a man of 60 years. The second study compared the cost effectiveness of proton beam therapy, stereotactic body radiotherapy and IMRT. Proton beam therapy was more expensive and produced lower quality of life than stereotactic body radiotherapy. Compared with IMRT, proton beam therapy had a cost per quality-adjusted life year of US\$36,344,000 (£24,230,000).

Activity and cost: No cost or activity data were available.

Equity: No specific equity issues were identified.

Summary and Conclusions

Despite the high prevalence of the diagnosis, the evidence about the effectiveness of proton beam therapy for prostate cancer is far from conclusive:

Shipley et al's (1995) trial compares a higher radiation dose delivered with protons with a lower dose delivered with photons. It indicates that more proton radiation does not improve outcomes but gives rise to more adverse effects.

Zeitman et al's (2010) trial is a comparison on two doses of proton beam therapy and therefore does not address the central uncertainty about the technique's effectiveness relative to other forms of radiotherapy. It suggests higher doses are more effective.

Kim et al's (2013) trial was too small to reach useful conclusions and in any case was also a comparison of different proton beam therapy regimes.

Hoppe et al (2014) reported slightly lower rates of side effects with proton beam therapy than intensity-modulated photon radiotherapy. However, this study was an unrandomised comparison of two cohorts not assembled with this hypothesis in mind, and was confounded by differences between the men in each cohort.

Gray et al's (2013) study had the same drawbacks as Hoppe et al's. It reported different patterns of adverse effects from different forms of radiotherapy, with no technique emerging as least toxic.

Sheets et al (2012) indicated no significant differences in toxicity, apart from a higher risk of gastrointestinal adverse effects after proton beam therapy than after intensity-modulated photon radiotherapy.

Fang et al's study indicates no advantages from proton beam therapy.

The analyses of cost effectiveness are based on this insecure and inconclusive evidence of the relative effectiveness and safety of proton beam therapy. They do not indicate that the treatment is cost effective.

6 Documents which have informed this Policy

There are no relevant UK documents. The American Society of Therapeutic Radiology has however issued an ASTRO Model Policy on Proton Beam Therapy in which Prostate Cancer treatment with proton beam therapy is not supported except within trials or registration studies, as there is a need for more evidence.

<https://www.astro.org>

7 Date of Review

This document will be reviewed when information is received which indicates that the policy requires revision.

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