Malignant Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC)

Introduction

This leaflet is for patients who may experience a rare condition called Malignant Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC), at some point in the future. The following advice explains what symptoms to look out for and who to contact if you think you have developed any of these symptoms.

The Spinal Cord

The spinal cord is the chain of nerves that sit within the backbone (spine/vertebrae). The nerves for all parts of the body, including the legs, arms, bladder and bowel branch from the spinal cord.

What is MSCC?

If a tumour grows in the back bone, the spinal cord can become squashed (compressed). This can cause pain, changes in sensation and weakness. If left untreated the nerves in that area would be permanently damaged. Your oncologist (cancer doctor) must be alerted quickly if you have any of these early warning signs. Diagnosis and treatment can be arranged straight away to avoid further damage to the nerves wherever possible.

Early Warning Signs

- Back pain that you have not experienced before, that is severe or getting worse and lasts more than a week. Especially pain in the upper back. The pain may feel like a 'band' around your body or shoot down your leg.
- Feeling unsteady on your feet, finding it difficult to walk, for example your legs giving way as you stand.
- Numbness or 'pins and needles' in toes, fingers or buttocks.
- Difficulty passing urine – loss of control of your bladder, passing small amounts or no urine at all.
- Constipation or problems controlling your bowels.

If your oncologist has told you that you are at risk of MSCC and you think you may have any of the above symptoms, please contact the hospital straight away, using the telephone number on page two.

compassionate care

These symptoms can also be caused by other conditions. It is important that your cancer team at the hospital assess you to rule out or confirm MSCC. If you have any of these symptoms, try to keep your back straight and avoid bending until you have been assessed by a doctor and told it is safe to do so.

Remember

The earlier MSCC is diagnosed, the greater the chance of treatment being successful

Diagnosing MSCC

When you or your relative telephones the number below you will be asked several questions by the acute oncology specialist. This may be a doctor or a nurse.

It is a good idea to have the following information next to you before making the phone call:

- Your hospital number
- A list of the medication you are taking
- A pad and pen

If the specialist suspects you have MSCC they will arrange for you to attend/be admitted to your local hospital for further examination. You may be transferred to a specialist hospital for treatment, so it may be useful to pack enough nightwear, toiletries etc for five or six nights.
An MRI scan may also be arranged. If for medical reasons you cannot have an MRI scan, a different scan will be done. The scan will be done at your local hospital and will help the specialist decide if you need transferring to St James University Hospital at Leeds Teaching Hospitals for treatment.

You may be prescribed steroids (Dexamethasone) to reduce the pressure and swelling around your spinal cord. If you are diabetic, or have had problems with steroids in the past, please tell the doctor.

Oncology Emergency Assessment Contact the Chemotherapy Helpline
01422 222999

Treatment

If MSCC is diagnosed, treatment must start as soon as possible. Your treatment may vary depending on the type of cancer you have, the area of the spine affected and your general health.
The most common treatment is radiotherapy but some people will benefit from surgery or a combination of both. If you are very poorly, surgery or radiotherapy may not be suitable. If this is the case you will be treated with steroids.

The specialist team at Calderdale and Huddersfield Hospitals or Leeds Teaching Hospitals will discuss the treatment options with you and your family. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating you are willing to have the offered treatment. No medical treatment can be given without your consent.

Further Support

If the information in this leaflet has caused you any anxiety you may want to speak to somebody about this. This would be your **Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) or Key Worker.**

Name of my contact person _____

Telephone number _____

Date leaflet given _____

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Acute Oncology Service
Greenlea Unit
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary

Telephone No: 01484 343601

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obrat'te se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym fomacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
براۓ میہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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