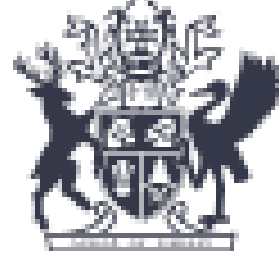


Reimagining Cancer Supportive Care: Developing a New Model of Allied Health services for patients undergoing Head and Neck Immunotherapy

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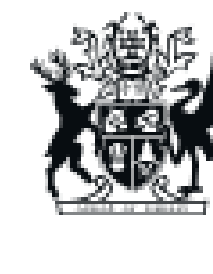


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BACKGROUND

- Immunotherapy for head and neck cancer (HNC) is an emerging treatment modality, currently reshaping the landscape of HNC treatment.
- Unlike traditional treatment modalities (surgery, chemoradiation) engagement of allied health in the care of patients receiving immunotherapy is yet to be formally established.
- Optimal, evidence based supportive care in this population is key to patient wellbeing, symptom management, and treatment adherence.
- By interviewing both frontline cancer care workers (allied health, medical and nursing staff) and health managers, this study will provide key insights into the needs currently faced by HNC patients receiving immunotherapy
- Findings will assist in understanding the gaps in existing care provision and inform the development of a new model of care appropriate for this population.

STUDY AIM:

To explore the perspectives of the immunotherapy team to examine current allied health services and current and future care needs of patients



METHODS

Setting

- Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane
- Sunshine Coast University Hospital, Sunshine Coast

Design

- Qualitative descriptive design

Participants

- 19 MDT participants across two sites (Table 1)

Procedure

- Purposive sampling
- Semi structured interviews via Microsoft Teams

Analysis

- Thematic analysis
- Collaborative coding and theme development

Table 1. Participant demographics

Cancer Care Staff Demographics		(n)
Princess Alexandra Hospital	Speech Pathologist	2
	Dietitian	2
	Social Worker	1
	Physiotherapist	1
	Occupational Therapist	1
	Clinical Nurse Consultant	2
	Medical Oncologist	2
	Managers	3
Sunshine Coast University Hospital	Dietitian	1
	Social Worker	1
	Physiotherapist	1
	Medical Oncologist	1
	Clinical Nurse Consultant	1
		19

RESULTS

Most cancer care frontline workers interviewed did not feel that current service models are meeting the needs of these patients.

Preliminary analysis revealed 5 key themes:

The need to establish a clear pathway of care

You're really banking on the patient contacting you with any issues during clinic time (CNC02)

It is pretty obvious [for chemo-rad pts] exactly how much support they get, once they start on the immuno then that's not there anymore (CNC02)

The importance of early identification and intervention for treatment-related symptoms.

If something does happen, you have to get on top of that very quickly because that immune system can go to town (CNC03)

Patient complexity and comorbidity

as a population generally they're pretty frail and elderly (ONC01)

They are quite complex patients (ONC02)

Survivorship and psychological wellbeing

I always think the whole psychological support aspect is missing (ONC01)

Are these patients palliative or maybe they're gonna survive for a long time? That's all really uncertain (AH01)

The importance of care coordination, concerns re: increasing referrals and resource issues

I think as immunotherapy becomes more frequently used we will very quickly outgrow the capacity we have at the moment (AH02)

CONCLUSION

Increased understanding of the role of allied health to inform high value care pathways is needed to enable early identification and management of toxicities.

Feedback from staff reflects that existing allied health models do not adequately meet the needs of this population, pointing to the necessity for a new, tailored model of care.

This study is part of a larger project aiming to explore patient experiences, staff perspectives and comprehensive treatment related toxicities and functional impacts, which will inform future care design.

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