Targeted Treatment for patients with Metastatic Melanoma

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What is this booklet about?

This booklet is designed to give you information about targeted treatment for melanoma. We hope it will answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your doctor but helps you to understand more about what is discussed.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham is a specialist centre for the treatment of melanoma, including the use of targeted treatments.

What is Targeted Treatment?

Targeted treatment is the use of drugs that targets a specific component of your cancer and kills the cancer cells. There are several different targeted drugs that can be used to treat melanoma. This type of treatment is only suitable if your cancer has this specific component; if it doesn’t then you would not benefit from this type of treatment. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

What is the aim of treatment?

The aim of treatment is to shrink any cancer that you have and may, in a small number of people, make the disease go away completely. There is some evidence that people who have targeted treatment may have a better chance of living longer.

Are there any side effects?

Targeted treatment is generally well tolerated however you may experience some side effects. The main side effects that we see are:

- Pyrexia
- Chills and fever
• Rash
• Joint pains
• Generalised tiredness and fatigue

There may be other side effects that you may not be aware of but they will be apparent on blood tests.

Side effects can occur at any time whilst on treatment and would usually resolve if we interrupt treatment and reduce the dose but it may be necessary to stop treatment if the side effects are severe.

**How is targeted treatment given?**

Treatment is given by tablets which you take at home usually twice every day. Once you have decided to have targeted treatment your doctor will ask you to sign a consent form.

You will then be given an appointment with a pharmacist who will go through how to take the tablets and what sort of side effects to look out for. At this appointment you will be given a red card with a number on. This number should be used any time of day or night if you are concerned about side effects.

**How often will I need to come to hospital?**

We will usually give you four weeks supply of drugs and then see you in clinic every four weeks to see how you are getting on and check that you are fit to carry on with treatment.

There may be other appointments as well, but we will discuss these with you so you know what to expect.
What should I do if I experience any side effects?

If you are feeling unwell or experiencing any side effects then you should contact the red card number for advice. You may be asked to come to hospital for review or advised to go to your local hospital if you live some distance away.

How long will I need to have targeted treatment for?

Treatment will continue for as long as you are benefiting from it. You will have regular scans to monitor if you are still benefiting from treatment. If your disease continues to grow then we would stop the tablets and talk to you about other options for treatment. Sometimes if the disease responds well and we can no longer see any disease we may consider stopping treatment but this would need to be discussed and agreed between you and your doctor.

We may need to interrupt treatment or stop it if you experience severe side effects.

What happens after treatment?

We will often offer appointments in clinic to see how you are getting on and the frequency of these will depend on your individual circumstances. Your doctor will agree with you what is appropriate for you. If there are other options for treatment, then these will be discussed with you.

The role of your CNS

Your Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS or sometimes called key worker) is an experienced skin oncology nurse who works with the other members of the team to provide specialist medical and psychological
care to people with melanoma and their families.

The role of your CNS is to coordinate any investigations, treatment and follow-up care during your cancer journey. They are there to clarify any information, discuss matters that are important to you, provide emotional support and refer to other professionals if required. It is very important that you are able to have your questions answered and concerns discussed and the CNS team will make every effort to ensure this. You will be given a contact telephone number for the CNS team so that you are able to contact them should you have any worries or need further information when at home.

It may help to write down questions as you think of them so that you have them ready. It may also help to bring someone with you when you attend your outpatient appointments.

**Local sources of further information:**

You can visit any of the health/cancer information centres listed below:

**University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust**
The Patrick Room, Cancer Centre
Heritage Building, Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Birmingham, B15 2TH
**Tel:** 0121 371 3539/3537

**Health Information Centre**
Birmingham Heartlands Hospital
Bordesley Green
Birmingham, B9 5SS
**Tel:** 0121 424 2280
Patient Information Centre
Good Hope Hospital, Rectory Road
Sutton Coldfield, B75 7RR
Tel: 0121 424 9946

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust
The Courtyard Centre, Sandwell General Hospital (Main Reception)
Lyndon
West Bromwich, B71 4HJ
Tel: 0121 507 3792

Walsall PACT (Patient Advisory Cancer Team)
Tel: 0800 783 9050

About this information
This guide is provided for general information only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Every effort is taken to ensure that this information is accurate and consistent with current knowledge and practice at the time of publication. We are constantly striving to improve the quality of our information. If you have a suggestion about how this information can be improved, please contact us via our website.
Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.
The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4323.

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