



21 October 2020

Our ref: FOI/22928

Thomas Harding

Email: [request-692771-47fdb94c@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-692771-47fdb94c@whatdotheyknow.com)

Dear Mr Harding,

**Re: Urology Department: Impact of COVID-19 on Prostate Cancer Diagnosis, Treatment and Support**

I refer to your Freedom of Information (FOI) request received on 22 September 2020 and would like to apologise for the slight delay in providing this response. I hope you find this information helpful but if you need to clarify anything please do not hesitate to contact us.

- 1. Did you suspend your MRI before biopsy service for patients with suspected prostate cancer as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

No

- 2. If yes, have you now resumed MRI before biopsy for patients with suspected prostate cancer?**

Not applicable

- 3. Do you currently use a pre-MRI clinical triage for patients with suspected prostate cancer? By pre-MRI clinical triage, we mean a process, often Clinical Nurse Specialist led, that determines patient suitability for MRI before biopsy**

Yes

- 4. Has your radiology department introduced any new MRI exclusion criteria for patients with suspected prostate cancer as a result of COVID-19?**

No

- 5. If yes, do you plan to maintain any of these exclusion criteria once restrictions to limit patients' COVID-19 risk are lifted?**

Not applicable.

- 6. Did you stop conducting biopsies for patients with suspected prostate cancer as a result of COVID-19 infection risks?**

No

- 7. If yes, have you resumed biopsy services for patients with suspected prostate cancer?**

Not applicable.

- 8. Do you offer transperineal biopsy under local anaesthetic?**

Yes

**9. Following an MRI scan for suspected prostate cancer, what criteria do you use to select patients for biopsy? Please include all that apply:**

- Patients with a PI-RADS or Likert score of three or greater, but only if PI-RADS or Likert score three patients have other clinical indications (such as age, ethnicity, PSA density) that make them higher risk.
- Patients with a PI-RADS or Likert score of four or greater.

**10. Did you delay radiotherapy treatment for prostate cancer patients, as a result of COVID-19?**

Yes

**11. If yes, have you cleared your backlog for prostate cancer radiotherapy treatment?**

Yes

**12. Did you delay radical prostatectomy for prostate cancer patients as a result of COVID-19?**

Yes

**13. If yes, have you cleared your radical prostatectomy backlog?**

Yes – have cleared with assistance from the Independent Sector (Dublin).

**14. To address your backlog did or are you using a protocol to risk stratify patients and prioritise patients with high-risk and locally advanced prostate cancer for treatment within 3 months?**

Cases were stratified to their risk groups at Multi-Disciplinary Meetings.

Hormone therapy is nearly always started within 3 months, if not much sooner in these cases.

Radiotherapy is not started within 3 months – intended delay beyond 3 months has a good evidence base.

**15. Does your protocol apply to new patients with high-risk and locally advanced prostate cancer with the intention to radically treat them within 3 months of diagnosis?**

Belfast Trust did not have a significant backlog of new patients -see response at Question 14.

**16. Do you have prostate cancer Personalised Stratified Follow Up (PSFU) protocols in place?**

Yes

**17. If Yes, do you have a digital remote monitoring system in place for follow up?**

No

**18. If no, do you plan to implement a digital remote monitoring system for follow up?**

Yes - the Clinical Nurse Specialist is developing this.

**19. Which of the following criteria are part of your follow up protocols?**

Patients have access to a Support Worker who acts as their key worker for the duration of their follow-up care.

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which we have handled your Freedom of Information (FOI) request you may wish to complain. You should write to: Public Liaison Service, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, Nore Villa, Knockbracken Health Care Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8BH or alternatively e-mail: [publicliaison@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:publicliaison@belfasttrust.hscni.net) within two months of the date of this response and your complaint will be considered and a response provided, usually within 20 working days of receipt.

Should you still be dissatisfied with the outcome, you can proceed to the second review stage by contacting the Information Commissioner, The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF who will undertake an independent review. It is important to note that if you refer any matter to the Information Commissioner, you will need to show evidence of having gone through the Trust's review process to try to resolve the matter with the Trust in the first instance.

If you require any further information or wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Public Liaison Officer