

# Evaluating Radiation Therapy Care Coordination at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH) – how prepared are patients for radiation planning and treatment?

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**Background:** In 2006 a telephone based Radiation Therapy Care Coordinator (RTCC) service was established at the RBWH with pilot funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health's program for Cancer Care Coordinators. The RTCC role was established to meet an identified need within the radiation therapy service at RBWH. There was an increasing problem of patients either not attending for radiation planning or arriving inadequately prepared for the planning procedure. It provided radiation therapists with the opportunity to undertake a non-technical role focussed on information and supportive care to patients prior to radiation planning and treatment. In 2012 a study commenced with the aim of seeking patients' views of the RTCC service, and information on patients' preparedness for radiation planning and treatment.

**Method:** A literature search was undertaken using key words – information, cancer, patients, survey, care coordinator, and radiation therapy. A self administered survey was developed. RBWH Ethics Committee approval was granted (HREC12/QRBW/189). Questions related to demographics/tumour site, information provision, contact with the Radiation Therapy Care Coordinator and the patients' experience of planning and treatment. The survey was undertaken between mid December 2012 and mid-February 2013.

**Results:** 163 surveys were distributed to adult patients receiving a radical course of radiotherapy. 113 were returned, a response rate of 69%. 21% of patients reported not being fully prepared for their radiation planning appointment. Contact with the RTCC was a significant factor ( $p=0.02$ ) in preparing patients for radiation planning.

**Discussion:** The survey has validated the position of RTCC and its value for patients receiving radiation treatment. It provided a means of assessing the quality of service delivery by radiation therapists.