

Date: 26 September 2013

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Media Release

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New equipment to help treat cancer

Patients undergoing radiotherapy treatment for cancer at the Royal United Hospital are benefiting from new, state of the art equipment.

The RUH has replaced one of its two Linear Accelerators (LINACs) with a new LINAC and has upgraded the machine which was installed two years ago so that they match.

Radiotherapy uses high energy x-rays directed to the particular part of the body which needs the treatment. It is an extremely effective way of treating cancer, and can also be used to treat non-cancerous tumours.

The new LINACs can deliver Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT), which allows complex shaped malignant tumours to be treated. IMRT is an advanced form of radiotherapy that can be used in one in three people who are having radiotherapy to cure their cancer. The treatment minimizes unpleasant side-effects and can more accurately target cancer tissue while preserving healthy surrounding tissues.

Along with delivering faster radiotherapy treatment the new LINACs have the latest imaging capability ensuring that extremely accurate radiotherapy is delivered every day.

Every patient that receives radiotherapy has a custom-made treatment plan. Previously staff had to draw up two treatment plans – one for each machine – in case one was not available, for example when planned maintenance was being carried out, but now they only need one as the two LINACs are the same. The time saved is used to prepare the more complex IMRT plans for those patients that would benefit from it.

In addition to the new LINAC, the RUH successfully bid for £440,000 from the Radiotherapy Innovation Fund enabling the purchase of additional equipment and software to aid patient comfort and complex planning, essential for accurate treatment. This fund will increase the number of patients benefiting from this new technology.

Sue MacGregor, Radiotherapy Service Manager, said: “This is really good news for patients. We have two identical treatment units to improve efficiency and with new changing rooms, patients will benefit from enhanced privacy and dignity whilst in our care. We can now offer IMRT to all those patients who would benefit from it.

“Depending on their plan, patients can be having between one and 37 radiotherapy treatments and may be coming almost every day for up to eight weeks.

“Having two identical machines is more reassuring for patients, and enables us to provide better care.



“Patients are asked to stay very still when they undergo radiotherapy and for those patients having radiotherapy to the pelvic area we also now have new positioning boards which should make it more comfortable for them during the treatment.”

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