



http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/prod_consump/groups/cr_common/@nre/@pa/documents/image/cr_008642_ri.jpg border="0" /> <p>A new £15 million fund could provide nearly 8,000 more cancer patients with access to an advanced radiotherapy technique that results in fewer side effects.</p>

<p>The Cancer Radiotherapy Innovation Fund, unveiled by Prime Minister David Cameron and Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, will cover the remainder of 2012-13.</p>

<p>The investment will be used to roll out the use of Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT) across the NHS, so that more cancer patients can benefit from the technique.</p>

<p>IMRT works by targeting a tumour with more precise doses of radiation, while minimising the damage done to surrounding healthy tissue.</p>

<p>The therapy will particularly aid patients with head and neck cancers - lowering the possibility of side effects like damaged salivary glands, which can interfere with the enjoyment and digestion of food.</p>

<p>New figures show that at present a majority of the 50 radiotherapy treatment centres across England are not offering IMRT to all patients who would benefit from the technique.</p>

<p>The new fund will be managed by the <a target="_blank"

href="http://ncat.nhs.uk/our-work/ensuring-better-treatment/radiotherapy#tab-overview">National Radiotherapy Implementation Group, working closely with Cancer Research UK.</p>

<p>"We're delighted with today's announcement that the Government has found the money to speed up the roll out of more targeted radiotherapy techniques," Dr Harpal Kumar, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, said. "Today's announcement is a great step forward and excellent news for cancer patients."</p>

<p>Dr Kumar said the additional investment would help the UK become a "world-leader" in cancer treatment, adding that the advanced radiotherapy techniques offered patients a higher chance of survival.</p>

<p>He said it was "unacceptable" that patients in some regions were currently denied access to these types of therapy, and pointed to the fact that radiotherapy cures more cancers than drugs.</p>

<p>Radiotherapy specialists will work alongside Cancer Research UK and professional bodies to help radiotherapy centres roll out advanced radiotherapy. The experts will provide support and training, as well as guidance on applying for funding intended to make sure that patients nationwide have access to safe radiotherapy.</p>

<p>The Cancer Radiotherapy Innovation Fund follows in the footsteps of the Cancer Drugs Fund, which has so far assisted more than 21,000 patients.</p>

<p>From April 2013, advanced radiotherapy techniques will be available to all patients where clinically appropriate, safe and cost-effective.</p>

<p>The new NHS Commissioning Board system means that cancer treatments will be planned and paid for on a national basis, helping patients avoid the old-fashioned 'postcode lottery', which led to some patients missing out because of where they happened to live.</p>

<p>The change means that in theory, all patients with brain tumours who need stereotactic radiosurgery, for example, will have precisely the same access to this treatment.</p>

<p>Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said: "Radiotherapy is one of the most clinically and cost-effective treatments for cancer and this funding will bring our additional investment in radiotherapy over the Spending Review period to £165 million."</p>

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