



Action 1.9: Assess materials currently available that advise cancer patients about how to deal with other illnesses and treatment side effects, identifying any gaps and flagging these to local commissioners and providers. Also include materials for complex conditions that could be transferrable when a patient is travelling. This should include but not be exclusive to the Treatment Summary.

Recommendation

Promote use of the Macmillan Treatment Summary Form to the Shropshire & Mid-Wales Hospitals and Cancer Commissioners. People living with cancer (& other complex medical conditions) would benefit from clear guidance on how to distinguish between symptoms that may require specialist attention and prompt GP/nurse contact, and symptoms of new illnesses/infections that can be treated by general practise.

Background & Justification

There is a great deal of literature and advice available on the various aspects of living with cancer and other complex medical conditions – in print form and on-line. A lot has been produced by Macmillan Cancer, Cancer Research UK, specialist NHS hospitals, national foundations devoted to specific conditions (e.g. Rare Cancer Foundation, Neuro-Endocrine Tumor Patient Foundation), & the NHS's Patient.co.uk. Pamphlets such as "*Chemotherapy Induced Nausea and Vomiting*", "*Eating problems and cancer*", "*Hello, and how are you?*", and "*Life after cancer treatment*" all have sections discussing common cancer symptoms & treatment side-effects, and how to cope with them. Many of them say something like:

"It can also help to find out which symptoms you should look out for and who to get in touch with if you do notice any"

and some provide suggestions on when to see a GP/nurse if symptoms are troubling.

However, they don't provide guidance on how to distinguish between symptoms caused by a new illness/infection and symptoms caused by the underlying cancer/condition or a flare-up of the underlying condition. It would in fact be quite hard to do this, given the wide range of symptoms and conditions possible. Nonetheless this is an issue raised quite frequently in on-line forums and patient meetings.

The Treatment Summary Form proposed by Macmillan¹, to be provided to all patients after their initial cancer treatment, would be one way of ensuring such guidance tailored to each individual. The form provides a fairly technical summary of the underlying condition and treatments undertaken; but has a section that specifically requires the supervising consultant to detail any "**Alert Symptoms that require referral back to the specialist team**". The form has been trialed successfully in some parts of the UK but has not yet been put into widespread use¹. It is designed with cancer patients in mind; but would require fairly minor changes to be suitable for people living with other complex medical conditions as well.

¹ Treatment Summary: a tool to improve communication between cancer services and primary care.
www.ncsi.org.uk/what-we-are-doing/assessment-care-planning/treatment-summary/