

headandneck 5000

Does early delivery of specialist palliative care offer enhanced support to patients with head and neck cancer: a feasibility study exploring acceptability and health economic parameters

Principle Applicant: Dr Catriona Mayland

Co-Applicants: Dr Paola Dey, Professor Sheila Paye, Dr Catrin Tudor-Smith, Professor Simon Rogers, Professor John Ellershaw, Professor Barbara Jack, Dr Anna Gola, Dr Stephen Mason

Scientific Outline

Summary

Advanced head and neck cancer affects about 12,000 patients in England each year and this number is increasing. Both patients and their families have very complex needs. The cancer and treatment cause difficulties in speaking, breathing, eating, as well as pain, social isolation and low mood. Although the hope is to cure the cancer, with advanced cancer there is a high risk the disease will recur and ultimately prove fatal. In these circumstances, most patients wish to die at home but at least 4 out of 10 will die in hospital.

Traditionally, Specialist Palliative Care (SPC) teams provide support to patients with illnesses that can't be cured but current support is variable. There have been several research studies which provided SPC in different ways and times to patients with cancer. When SPC was given early in the patient's care, the research studies showed benefits such as improved symptoms and wellbeing. None however, have focused on head and neck cancer patients.

As part of our overall vision is to develop the best way to provide SPC for head and neck cancer patients, we first need to understand more about the current needs for patients. Using the Head and Neck 5000 database, we will be able understand more about the demographic, regional, socio-economic and quality of life factors that potentially influence how and where head and neck cancer patients die. Additionally, the data will help recognise potential unmet needs by further analysis of the quality of life data set.

KEYWORDS: palliative care; terminal care; head and neck cancer; place of death