Radiotherapy Board

Meeting held at 10.00am on Thursday 18 March 2021

PUBLIC MINUTES

Present: Gill Hodges (Chair, Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR))
Caroline Berry (IR(MER)† Team, Care Quality Commission)
Dr Rachel Cooper (The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR))
Dr Vivian Cosgrove (Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM))
Una Findlay (Public Health England (PHE))
Carl Flint (Lay Member)
Spencer Goodman (SCoR)
Dr Imogen Locke (Radiotherapy Clinical Reference Group, NHS England)
Bernadette McCarthy (Wales)
Dr Hannah Tharmalingam (RCR)
Dr Karen Venables (IPEM)
Prof Jonathan Wadsley (Clinical and Translational Radiotherapy Research Working Group (CTRad))

Guest: Dr Alexander Burnett (National Radiotherapy Fellow, NHS England / RCR)

In attendance: Ms Gillian Dollamore (Executive Officer, Clinical Oncology, RCR)

1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest
Dr Karen Venables (representing IPEM) and Prof Suneil Jain (representing Northern Ireland) had joined the Radiotherapy Board since the previous meeting.
Dr Alexander Burnett (National Radiotherapy Fellow, NHS England / RCR) attended the meeting as a guest of the Radiotherapy Board.
Apologies for absence had been received from Charlotte Beardmore, Martin Glegg and Prof Jain.
No conflicts of interests were declared either before or during the meeting.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting
The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2020 were approved without amendment.

3 Matter Arising
3.1 Terms of Reference
The Radiotherapy Board’s Terms of Reference had been updated to allow for additional meetings to be held during the year, if exceptional circumstances or urgent business arose, and for meetings to be held remotely.

3.2 Radiotherapy Dataset – consultation on Version 6
The Radiotherapy Board had responded to Public Health England’s consultation on version 6 of the new-look Radiotherapy Dataset in December 2020.

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† Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposures) Regulations
3.3 Vision for Radiotherapy 2014-2024

From April 2021 Cancer Research UK (CRUK) would resume work on a commentary piece marking the midway point in its Vision for Radiotherapy 2014-2024 document.

4 Radiotherapy services and COVID-19

4.1 Impact of 2nd wave and service recovery

Radiotherapy Board members reflected on the impact of the winter 2020/21 wave of COVID-19 on service provision and recovery. Radiotherapy departments had continued to treat patients safely and effectively throughout the pandemic. However, many centres remained under considerable pressure as they were managing a post-pandemic increase in patient referrals whilst also coping with service recovery.

The Radiotherapy Board had updated its statement on COVID-19 in November 2020 to acknowledge and emphasise the work of the radiotherapy community in ensuring the continuation of services during the pandemic. It was agreed that a further statement should be prepared to further acknowledge the efforts of the radiotherapy community and the continued challenges it faced.

4.2 Data collection and research

Work had continued across a wide range of projects examining the impact of COVID-19 on cancer services and patients. These included the development of a COVID-RT Dashboard (using data from the Radiotherapy Dataset (RTDS)), the UK Coronavirus Cancer Monitoring Project and COVID-RT.

5 Radiotherapy Awareness

5.1 All Party Parliamentary Group on Radiotherapy and Action Radiotherapy

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Radiotherapy, supported by Action Radiotherapy, had continued to raise the profile of radiotherapy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and to lobby for greater investment in services.

5.2 Radiotherapy Board flyer

Reflecting the rapid transition to online meetings, members considered the need for digital rather than paper-based resources for promoting the work and activities of the Radiotherapy Board. They would consider whether or not the Board should have a virtual presence at any conferences in 2021.

5.3 Radiotherapy Board website

Members considered a draft specification for an independent website for the Radiotherapy Board, to replace the information hosted on the RCR’s website. Some suggestions were made for taking this forward. However, recognising the current demands on time and resources, it was also suggested that the Board consider alternative ways to promote its works.

6 Radiotherapy Data

6.1 Update on the Radiotherapy Dataset

Radiotherapy Board members noted progress with establishing the new National Institute for Health Protection (NIHP) and the ongoing development of the RTDS. Work was continuing to expand the RTDS as a UK-wide resource although there were, as yet, no data from Northern Ireland. Mrs Hodges would establish a contact point with whom PHE could pursue discussions.

PHE was beginning a review of all reports in the Cancerstats 2 portal. It had also developed a public version of the COVID-19 dashboard which was available on Cancerdata.

6.2 Health Economics in Radiation Oncology (HERO) project – economic model

Data collection for the HERO economic model had resumed early in 2021. This had focused on incorporating activity data from the RTDS. Remaining stages of the project would cover resources data. The aim was for all information to be collated by the end of April.
7 Radiotherapy Commissioning

7.1 Update from Radiotherapy Clinical Reference Group

Dr Locke reported on the ongoing national roll-out of Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy and on the resumption of work on the Radiotherapy Learning Healthcare System (RLHS). The RLHS was being led by Prof Tim Illidge (Clinical Lead), supported by Dr Alexander Burnett (National Radiotherapy Fellow, NHS-E/RCR). It had developed a Radiotherapy Transformation Work Programme with three strategic priorities to a) support and enable ODNs to deliver change, b) speed up the translation of clinical trials and technology innovation into routine clinical practice, and c) maximise population access to and benefit from radiotherapy.

7.2 Children’s, Teenage and Young Adult’s Cancer Services

NHS England had announced the start of a review of children’s radiotherapy services. The RCR was a key stakeholder for this review.

8 Joint SABR training proposal

Radiotherapy Board members approved in principle a proposal to develop a national training course in SABR, to support all radiotherapy professionals involved in delivery of this technique.

9 Radiotherapy Workforce

The SCoR was working closely with Health Education England to implement the recommendations of the RePAIR (Reducing Pre-registration Attrition and Improving Retention) project. Work was continuing to develop a capability framework for Advanced Clinical Practitioners and the SCoR was also contributing to an update of a number of the e-Learning for Healthcare resources.

In radiotherapy physics, IPEM had welcomed the recent increase in funding for places on the Scientist Training Programme. Level 7 apprenticeships had been approved for medical physics and apprenticeships for radiotherapy engineering were proving to be popular.

In Clinical Oncology, the RCR had welcomed a recent increase in the number of training places in 2021 and had worked with Heads of Training to ensure they could be supported locally.

10 Radiotherapy Safety / Medical Exposure

10.1 Medical Exposures Group – update

A monthly review of all radiotherapy error data continued to confirm that no clinically significant events or significant changes in trends had been identified that might be related COVID-19. Remote IR(ME)R inspections in Wales had identified good practice which it was hoped could provide shared learning. The Medical Exposures Group had also provided IR(ME)R inspector training for Healthcare Improvement Scotland.

Meetings of the Patient Safety in Radiotherapy Steering Group, and consequently its work programme, had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a retrospective analysis of the radiotherapy ‘unseen pathway’ had been completed and would be published shortly.

10.2 Care Quality Commission – IR(ME)R Team update

Inspection work had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic although providers considered to be high risk were still being inspected during this time. The standard inspection programme was due to resume from April 2021.

11 Radiotherapy Research

11.1 Update from CTRad

CTRad had hosted (online) a Proposals Guidance meeting in January and - jointly with the SCoR - a radiographers’ research workshop in February. Further workshops were being planned for 2021.

The COVID-RT project had received approval from the Health Research Authority for central data collection and analysis.
12  Proton Beam Therapy

12.1  NHS England proton beam therapy service

Radiotherapy Board members noted the continuation of proton beam therapy (PBT) services at The Christie Hospital throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. It was understood that progress with developing the PBT facility at University College London Hospital had been delayed by COVID-19.

The first UK clinical trial in PBT, focusing on throat cancer, was now taking place at The Christie Hospital. The RCR was hosting a series of webinars on PBT.

13  Guidance

13.1  On Target 2: updated guidelines for image-guided radiotherapy

All three professional bodies had approved the final draft of this new guidance in January 2021 and work was in hand to publish in April. There were plans thereafter to write an Editorial in Clinical Oncology and Radiotherapy Board members also supported a proposal for a webinar.

13.2  Management of cancer patients receiving radiotherapy with a cardiac implanted electronic device: a clinical guideline

Radiotherapy Board members noted progress with the review and updating of this guidance. They agreed to a 6-month extension to the timetable for completion, with a final draft now planned for autumn 2021.

13.3  IMRT in the UK: current access and predictions of future access rates

The Radiotherapy Board had previously received an enquiry about updating this 2015 document. However, more data were now routinely available from the RTDS and would provide an up-to-date picture of IMRT access. It was therefore agreed that IMRT in the UK: current access and predictions of future access rates should not be updated and should instead be withdrawn.

13.4  Top tips for implementing paperlite / paperless working in radiotherapy

Radiotherapy Board members noted that more centres had moved to, or were considering moving to, paperless working, and that this trend was likely to have accelerated with the rapid adoption of remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic. They agreed that the Board’s 2017 document Top tips for implementing paperlite / paperless working in radiotherapy should be reviewed accordingly, to ensure it still reflected current practice.

14  National Radiotherapy Consent Forms

Radiotherapy Board members welcomed the development of national tumour site-specific consent forms for radiotherapy. This work had been led by the RCR, supported by a multi-professional team.

15  Devolved Nations

15.1  Update from Northern Ireland

Radiotherapy Board members welcomed the development of a Cancer Strategy for Northern Ireland and in particular the inclusion in this of a section on radiotherapy.

15.2  Update from Scotland

Board members welcomed an update report from Scotland.

15.3  Update from Wales

The Radiotherapy Board noted interim support by the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee for HDR prostate treatment and that SABR would be commissioned for oligometastatic disease and hepatocellular carcinoma from April 2021.

16  Date of next meeting

Thursday 24 June 2021, 10am to 12noon.