

## **Part 3. Referral Information**

### **3.1 Guidelines for Urgent Referral**

High risk factors include history of smoking and excessive alcohol use.

- Hoarseness persisting for >6 weeks
- Ulceration of oral mucosa persisting for >3 weeks
- Oral swellings persisting for >3 weeks
- All red or red and white patches of the oral mucosa
- Dysphagia persisting for 3 weeks
- Unilateral nasal obstruction particularly when associated with purulent discharge
- Unexplained tooth mobility not associated with periodontal disease
- Unresolving neck masses for >3 weeks
- Cranial neuropathies
- Orbital masses<sup>1</sup>

Common presenting symptoms specific to each of the various Head and Neck cancer sites can be found in the practice pathways<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer Department of Health (England) Crown Copyright 2000 downloaded from <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/01/44/21/04014421.pdf> March 1, 2006

<sup>2</sup> The information for the following sites was taken from the UK Department of Health Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancers: nasopharynx, oral cavity, oropharynx, hypopharynx, nasal cavity and salivary. Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer Department of Health (England) Crown Copyright 2000 downloaded from <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/01/44/21/04014421.pdf> March 1, 2006

## **3.2 Information Required for Referral**

A legible referral or consultation letter highlighting presenting signs and symptoms, a completed referral form, and a pathology report documenting the cancer diagnosis as well as the results of any relevant investigations should be faxed to the referral office of the tertiary cancer center. A referral need not be delayed due to incomplete results from tests (either due to test scheduling delays or waiting time for test results). If any tests or reports are pending, the date of the procedure, and the location of the procedure should be noted, so that the reports may be obtained when available. Send in the referral while awaiting these results to facilitate a timely appointment for your patient.

## **3.3 Referral to the Tertiary Cancer Centres**

### **Head and Neck Cancer Site Team at the QEII Health Sciences Centre**

The Head and Neck team at the QEII is the primary referral centre for head and neck cancers in Nova Scotia. Referrals for head and neck cancers are normally faxed directly to the individual Head and Neck Surgeons. These include (but are not limited to):

Dr Robert Hart	fax	902 473-5667
Dr Joe Nasser	fax	902 473-3879
Dr Mark Taylor	fax	902 473-4016
Dr Jonathan Trites	fax	902 473-3816

Referrals to Medical and Radiation Oncology at the QEII Health Sciences Centre- Cancer Care Program may be faxed to the Nova Scotia Cancer Centre Referrals Office at 902-473-6079 (tel. 902-473-5140). Referrals to Medical and Radiation Oncology normally require pathological confirmation of cancer.

For urgent or emergent referrals, please page the appropriate specialist on call through the QEII HSC Locating service (902-473-2220) to discuss the referral.

If the referring physician would like to discuss a case with a specialist, it is recommended that they call the appropriate specialist (Radiation Oncology, Medical Oncology, or Head and Neck Surgeon) by calling 902-473-2220. Ask for the specialist on call or a specific physician at this number.

### **Melanoma of the Head and Neck**

Patients who have suspicious skin lesions or a newly diagnosed melanoma on the skin of the Head or Neck, especially those with a previous melanoma, or a strong family history of melanoma can be referred to the Melanoma Site Team at the QEII.

In 2008, it is expected that there will be a multidisciplinary melanoma clinic established at the QEII. Referrals can be sent to the Nova Scotia Cancer Centre Referrals Office as above.

### **Referral to the Cape Breton Cancer Centre**

Referrals for medical or radiation oncology at the Cape Breton Cancer Centre may be directed to the referrals/booking office at 902-567-7227 (fax 902-567-7911). For urgent or emergent referrals, please page the appropriate specialist on call through the Cape Breton Regional Hospital Locating service (902-567-8000) to discuss the referral.

### **Referral to the IWK Health Centre**

Pediatric/adolescent cancers are specifically **not** covered within this guideline. For these patients, referral calls to the IWK Health Centre may be directed to the pediatric hematologist/oncologist on call at 902-470-8888. For the phone consultation, the following information will be needed: name and age of the patient, parent's phone number, relevant history and physical examination, presumptive diagnosis, and any initial investigation results. Surgical biopsy or other intervention is **not** recommended until initial contact has been made with the IWK Health Centre pediatric hematologist/oncologist. A summary of history & physical examination and investigation results can be faxed to 902-470-7208. Further diagnostic investigations will be determined after initial contact and discussion

### **3.4 Supportive Care Referrals**

Health care professionals often need to refer patients to various agencies or groups for general or specialized supportive care. Within the province, there are a number of health care professional resources and community resources that may be useful to Head and Neck cancer patients. For more details on supportive care issues faced by Head and Neck cancer patients and the contributions that various health professions make, please see Part 5 (Supportive Care Issues) and Appendix VI (Specialized Health Professional Roles in Management of Head and Neck Cancers).

The **Canadian Cancer Society's Information Service** is a national, bilingual, toll-free service offering comprehensive information about Head and Neck cancers and cancer in general as well as community resources to cancer patients, their families, the general public and healthcare professionals. 1-888-939-3333 or [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)