

Head and Neck Cancer Site Team

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF HEAD AND NECK CANCERS (excluding Thyroid)

Objective:

This guideline provides an overview of the management of Head and Neck cancers (excluding thyroid) in Nova Scotia, including initial presentation, diagnosis and staging, referral, treatment, follow-up and surveillance. It also reviews the supportive care issues faced by patients with Head and Neck cancers and recommends practices to address these issues. A separate guideline on management of thyroid cancer is in development and expected to be approved in 2008.

Preamble Note:

Practice guidelines are intended to assist health care professionals with decisions throughout the spectrum of the cancer experience. Guidelines should never replace specific decisions for individual patients, and do not substitute for the shared decisions between any patient and doctor (or other health professional) which are unique to each circumstance. However, guidelines do provide evidence-based background information, consensus-based recommendations for similar problems, and a context for each individual decision.

This guideline will be revised as new evidence becomes available and reviewed every three years. Current versions of this guideline are available on the *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* website (www.cancercare.ns.ca)

This guideline was written to provide an introduction and overview of management of head and neck cancers for an audience of general practitioners and other health care providers working in a variety of settings and not for head and neck cancer specialists. As such, it is a synthesis of knowledge and evidence, and reflects the practice policies of the Head and Neck Cancer Site Team in Nova Scotia.

Comment on Clinical Research:

An important component of treatment decision-making for any patient is the potential for enrollment in relevant clinical research. The Head and Neck Cancer Site Team is committed to advancing patient care through participation in clinical trials and other clinical research projects. At any point in time, there may be a clinical trial or other clinical research opportunity related for any component of this guideline. As specific trials or clinical research projects become available, eligible patients may be offered the opportunity to enroll in the relevant trial or research project. Every effort will be made to accommodate patients for clinical research participation, but there will be eligibility restrictions for each project. Patients are encouraged to discuss clinical trials and other research opportunities with their cancer specialist. Current clinical trials are listed on the *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* website (www.cancercare.ns.ca).

Acknowledgements:

This guideline was developed by a collaborative effort of the Head and Neck Cancer Site Team, and was sponsored by *Cancer Care Nova Scotia*.

For further information on this, or any other guideline, please contact the Cancer Site Team Chair, or members of the Guidelines Resource Team, *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* (contact person Tel. (902) 473-4645 or 1-866-599-2267 or by e-mail info@ccns.nshealth.ca)

Guideline Approvals:

- Head and Neck Cancer Site Team-
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The Layout of this Guideline

For ease of use, this guideline is organized around the specific cancer type and includes a brief introduction about the cancer, histology and pathology (particularly staging information). Diagnostic workup, treatment options and sequences, management of the neck and follow up information are outlined in the practice pathway for that cancer. It is intended that the practice pathway gives sufficient information to a health professional caring for a Head and Neck cancer patient so that they can make appropriate referrals, order appropriate investigations and have a general understanding of the treatment likely to be provided.

Part 5 outlines in detail the supportive care issues faced by head and neck cancer patients and their appropriate management. Appendix VI outlines the specific contributions to the care of Head and Neck cancer patients by the various members of the health care team, Appendix VII provides more detail on the role of Speech Language Pathology and Appendices VIII and IX are resources for community-based providers.

Appendices II-V contains more detailed information on the specific treatment modalities for Head and Neck cancers.

Appendices X and XI are about the development of the guideline itself.

Not all the Appendices have been printed. Some are only available in the Comprehensive Version which can be found online at www.cancercare.ns.ca