



Minutes

Radiation Oncology Working Group (ROWG)

Date: 8 September 2023

Time: 1.00pm – 2.30pm

Location: Zoom

Chair: Claire Hardie, Clinical Executive, Te Whatu Ora Te Pae Hauora o Ruahine o Tararua MidCentral

Attendees: Aaron Phillips, Te Whatu Ora Te Pae Hauora o Ruahine o Tararua MidCentral
Andrew Cousins, Chief Medical Physicist, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha Canterbury
Brian Sheppard, Consumer member
Caroline Stark, General Manager, St Georges Cancer Care Centre
Darien Montgomerie, Site Manager, Bowen ICON
India Mikaere-Girvin, Māori member, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha Canterbury
Jamaine Fraser, Māori member, Te Aka Whai Ora
Leanne Tyrie, Radiation Oncologist, Kathleen Kilgour Centre
Lesley Long, Service Manager, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha Canterbury
Megan Purves, Branch Manager, Royal Australian & NZ College of Radiologists
Melissa James, Radiation Oncologist, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha Canterbury
Natasha Chisholm, Nurse Practitioner, Te Whatu Ora Waitaha Canterbury
Philippa Daly, Clinical Manager Radiation Therapy, Te Whatu Ora Canterbury
Shaun Costello, Radiation Oncologist, Te Whatu Ora Southern

Te Aho o Te Kahu:

Rami Rahal, CEO
Rose Simpson, Principal Clinical Advisor
Bridget Kerkin, Manager Clinical Advisory Team
Jan Smith, Te Aho o Te Kahu Te Manawa Taki Hub Manager
Dawn Wilson, Chief Advisor
Nicholas Glubb, Te Waipounamu Hub Manager
Alex Dunn, Senior Project Manager

Guests: Melissa Doyle, RANZCR
Joanne Gibbs, Te Whatu Ora
Hamish Brown, Te Whatu Ora
Susan Hewitt, Te Whatu Ora Capital, Coast & Hutt Valley
Matthew Seel, Te Whatu Ora, Waikato
Laura Ciurlionis, Te Whatu Ora Te Toka Tumai Auckland

Apologies: Louise Simonsen, Service Clinical Director, Te Whatu Ora Te Toka Tumai Auckland
Nichola Naidoo, Radiation Oncologist, Te Whatu Ora Capital, Coast & Hutt Valley
Roger Huang, Radiation Oncologist, Te Whatu Ora, Waikato
Joseph Stafford, Consumer member
Judy Moselen, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Te Whatu Ora Te Toka Tumai Auckland
Kate McLellan, Chief Executive Officer, Auckland Radiation Oncology

Minutes: Helen Palfreyman, Te Aho o Te Kahu

Welcome

Group was welcomed. Following karakia, there was a round of introductions.

Rami opened the meeting - This special meeting has been called in response to ongoing concern about the critical issues facing radiation oncology services around the motu, but specifically in Te Waipounamu. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss pragmatic solutions to stabilize access to radiation treatment in Aotearoa, while leveraging national capabilities as a whole. This short-term stabilization is needed for the next 3-4 months to buy time as measures are put in place that will offer relief in the medium term.

Introduction

Rami acknowledged all of the efforts to deliver care in challenging times. He recognised that centres and clinicians have been dealing with this issue for some time due to under investment going back many years. The current situation must be considered a national problem that requires coordinated national solutions.

One of those solutions is an aggressive, national recruitment and retention strategy including meaningful incentives. Another is outsourcing to private capacity in a coordinated, structured way, while safeguarding the public system, to fully utilize the capacity nationwide.

Workforce issues are a global challenge so we must leverage international best practice approaches and innovations to solve problems. We must consider how we can deliver relief in the short term while we stabilise the system sustainability in the medium and long term. It will take all of the system to identify solutions that will actually work.

Current situation

Slides were presented to the group outlining the current state of national radiation oncology services. It was acknowledged that when assessing clinical workload, the data sets could not capture all contexts and practice scenarios. It was agreed that work is required to define how to consistently count a full time equivalent (FTE) and how to measure workload eg. treatment course per FTE or First Specialist Assessment (FSA) per FTE?

Current workforces are under resourced – even if at full FTE, they are not sufficient. Training numbers are not high enough to meet need. Aotearoa relies on international recruits but there is an international shortage of the three key workforces - radiation oncologists (RO's), radiation therapists (RTs) and radiation oncology medical physicists (ROMP's). Also, Māori are underrepresented in the radiation oncology workforces and do not reflect the population - need creative ways to increase training pipeline for Māori RO and RT. It was acknowledged that the radiation oncology nursing workforce is harder to quantify and there is a need to better assess and address the requirements for nursing.

Te Whatu Ora update

Slides were presented to the group outlining the proposed Te Whatu Ora approach. Group discussion followed including:

- Further discussions on recruitment and retention strategies.
- Investigating what benefits/ideas can be obtained from examples of international solutions for indigenous populations.
- Additional LINAC stock required in Aotearoa.

- Te Whatu Ora representation at the ongoing national radiation oncology meeting. The national service fully engaged in finding solutions including putting specific and pragmatic solutions in place. Te Whatu Ora leadership is planning to travel to Te Waipounamu in the week starting 11 September for a regional meeting to discuss immediate solutions to the Southern service challenges.
- There is recognition that clinicians work across public and private facilities. Discussion acknowledged the need to change the national attitude to private services and work more constructively together.
- The group identified their frustration at the critical issues for radiation oncology services nationally and identified the urgent need for action.

Meeting concluded with karakia.

Actions

- Te Whatu Ora leadership to visit Southern radiation oncology service during the week starting 11 September.