

The diagnostic oncology clinic (DOC) – referral for a *possible* cancer diagnosis

This leaflet explains more about the diagnostic oncology clinic. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is the diagnostic oncology clinic (DOC)?

This clinic is run by cancer specialists (oncologists) who can streamline tests and are trained to recognise symptoms which may suggest cancer.

Some patients will be found not to have cancer and a different cause for the symptoms or abnormalities may then be found.

Who is asked to attend the service?

You have been referred to the DOC because your symptoms or test results suggest a **possible** cancer diagnosis, and you need more tests to see if this is the case or not.

This clinic helps in one of two ways:

If you have had a scan that has identified abnormalities which may represent cancer, we will arrange to take a biopsy which involves removing a small sample of tissue. This tissue sample will then be examined under the microscope to look for any cancer cells.

If the biopsy shows cancer cells, we can usually work out where in the body the cancer started growing, which lets us target any further tests you need. We would then hope to be able to give the type of cancer a name and can talk about your best treatment options.

In some patients, a non-cancer diagnosis is given and a referral made to a specialist doctor for that condition.

You have already had a biopsy done that suggests cancer but it is not clear where the cancer started. You will have a number of tests to try and work out where this was.

Why do I need more tests and what will they be?

We know this may be a very difficult time, and having tests for cancer can be very stressful.

We need to find out if there is a confirmed cancer and where in the body it started so we can plan your treatment and refer you to a specialist.

You will probably have blood and urine tests and x-rays, and may also need the following:

- **Ultrasound:** this uses sound waves to build a picture of organs such as the abdomen, liver or pelvis. A gel is spread on the skin and a small device is passed over the area. It only takes a few minutes and is also sometimes used to guide a biopsy.
- **Computerised tomography (CT) scan, also known as a CAT scan:** this uses x-rays and a computer to produce a detailed picture of the inside of the body. It takes 10 – 30 minutes and you will need to lie on your back for the scan, which is painless. You may need an injection of dye before the scan.

- **Positron emission tomography (PET) scan:** this uses a small amount of a radioactive substance, called a tracer, which is injected an hour before the scan. The tracer gives off particles that can be detected by the PET scanner. You will be required to lie on your back during the scan, which may take place at the Royal Marsden Hospital.
- **Biopsy:** a small sample of tissue is taken to be examined under the microscope. How this is done depends on where the tissue sample is taken from. Your doctor will discuss this with you. Most biopsies only need a local anaesthetic which means you won't need to stay in hospital overnight.
- **Endoscopy of the stomach also known as a gastroscopy or OGD:** a thin flexible tube containing a camera is passed through the mouth, down the food pipe and into the stomach and first part of the bowel. This takes about seven to ten minutes and can be done under sedation to make sure you are comfortable.

If these tests help find where the cancer started, you will be referred to a consultant specialising in that area, who will take over your care and treatment.

A named clinical nurse specialist will also support you through your treatment.

Will we always be able to find out where the cancer started?

In a small number of patients we cannot find where the cancer started.

This type of cancer is rare and is called carcinoma unknown primary (CUP).

If this happens, the CUP team will care for you and make sure you get the best treatment.

What support will I get while I go through this process?

It can be hard to make sense of what is happening and difficult to explain it to other people, and the tests can be lengthy and exhausting.

The CUP clinic and team will support you throughout your care, and Dalisay Domingo, your clinical nurse specialist and key worker will co-ordinate your care and advise on the tests, investigations and treatments you might need. He can also offer support to your family or carers.

You can contact Dalisay on 020 8672 1255 and asking the operator to bleep 7250 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), or email him on dalisay.domingo@stgeorges.nhs.uk

Useful sources of information

The Cancer of Unknown Primary Foundation gives information and support to CUP patients and their families and friends. Their website is:

cupfoundjo.org

Who are the CUP team?

The team of people looking after you is called a multidisciplinary team (MDT).

The members of the CUP MDT are experts in diagnosing, treating and caring for people with CUP.

The main members of the team are:

Dr Anna Mary Young, consultant oncologist

Dr Oliver Minton, consultant in palliative care

Dalisay Domingo, clinical nurse specialist/key worker Carcinoma of Unknown Primary (CUP)

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about CUP, please contact Dalisay Domingo on 020 8672 1255 and asking the operator to bleep 7250 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), Out of hours, please contact the oncology on-call doctor via operator on 020 8672 1255.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

