Geriatric Oncology in New Zealand: an update

Dr Cris Hartopeanu – NZ SIOG Chair – Radiation Oncologist
Dr Matthew Neve – Radiation Oncology Registrar
Dr Michael Jameson – Medical Oncologist
Dr Siva Govender – Geriatrician
Robyn Hutton – Clinical Nurse Specialist Head and Neck

Introduction

2015 has been an exciting year for the field of Geriatric oncology in New Zealand. In addition to exciting research project developments, we have focused on strengthening the relationship between Oncologists and our Geriatrician colleagues. We are also championing the concept of geriatric oncology to the wider medical community through presentations at educational meetings. One major development has been the initiation of a pilot study investigating the implications of screening head and neck cancer patients to identify those who will likely benefit from a Comprehensive Geriatrician Assessment, before embarking on what is often an arduous treatment journey. The results of this trial are being assessed and we will aim to present this at the next SIOG conference.

Education/Research/Clinical Activities

- Development of a pilot study investigating the utility of incorporating the G8 screening tool together with Comprehensive Geriatric Assessments in our older head and neck cancer patients. Project ongoing, data to be presented at the next annual SIOG conference.
- Presentation to the National Conference of Geriatricians – attended by guest International Speakers and a member of the Ministry of Health.
- Presentation at a General Physicians Grand Round
- Appointment of a Geriatrician to assist with decision making at the Weekly Head and Neck cancer Multidisciplinary Meetings
- Development of a Geriatric Oncology team consisting of Dr Cris Hartopeanu – NZ SIOG Chair – Radiation Oncologist, Dr Matthew Neve – Radiation Oncology Registrar, Dr Michael Jameson – Medical Oncologist, Dr Siva Govender – Geriatrician, Robyn Hutton – ORL Clinical Nurse Specialist.
- Future goals:
  - 1) Possible appointment of Dr Siva Govender as NZ SIOG representative
  - 2) For Dr Matthew Neve (Radiation Oncology Registrar) to pursue a fellowship in Geriatric-Oncology

Conclusions

Our focus in 2015 has been on developing and integrating the principles of Geriatric Oncology into our current practice. Although still a relatively new concept in New Zealand, we have increased awareness of this specialty through Conference presentations and the development of a topical research project, which in addition will further optimise our care of the older adult population in New Zealand.

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