

CONTINUING TO SUPPORT RARE AND COMPLEX CANCER PATIENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Background

The Colorectal and Peritoneal Oncology Centre (CPOC) at The Christie treat patients with rare appendiceal tumours from all over the UK, alongside patients with complex colorectal and anal cancers. Due to the rarity and complexity of our patient groups, we offer a specific and personalised support network for each disease group.

The appendix/peritoneal patient days have been held on an annual basis since 2016. The complex bowel cancer support group is held monthly and largely facilitated by the patients themselves. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic both support groups were held face to face. This provided patients and their families the opportunity to interact with each other and staff members, having a positive impact in terms of survivorship and peer support.

Both support groups have guest speakers, including patient stories, physiotherapists, stoma nurses, clinical Psychologists and dieticians. In addition, patients have a live Q&A interactive session with consultants.

Method

Due to the uncertainty of the pandemic we were still keen for patients to benefit from the support groups and not lose something so important to them, therefore we provided the same support via virtual platforms.

The speakers for the appendix/peritoneal patient day remained in the auditorium to deliver the content for the day and the patients and their families watched this live from the comfort of their own home. For the day to be interactive the patients were provided with a link to submit questions electronically which were projected onto the auditorium screen.

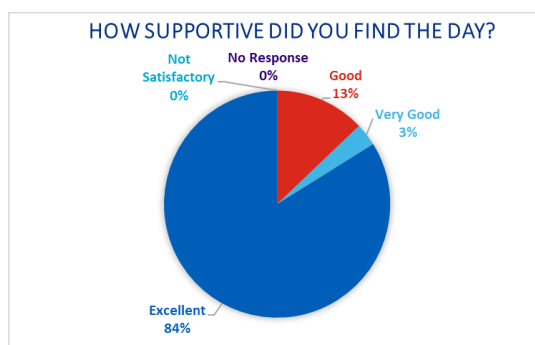
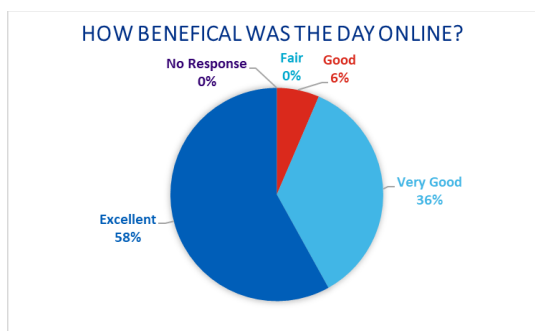
The complex bowel cancer support group moved to a completely online platform (Microsoft Teams) with patients/relatives dialling in from home on their computer, alongside the colorectal nurse specialists and the team from Maggie's Manchester. Patients were then able to interact directly with each other, ask questions and provide mutual support.



"Once again a very interesting and moving day. Stories of hope and courage that inspire. The day makes me feel like I've got a support network that is so comforting. The dedication of the Christie Team is humbling. Thank you to Rebecca for creating a platform that we are able to express ourselves, understanding our disease and treatments available."

Results

The feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive despite it being held virtually. The only downside was the patients being unable to network in person.



Conclusions

As a result of the positive feedback from the virtual sessions, we will now offer this alongside the face-to-face groups, so patients who cannot attend the Christie in person will also benefit and be supported living with and beyond their cancer diagnosis.

"Extremely useful day. The opportunity to maintain contact with the hospital is so important, similarly to receive the specialist updates on research."

"Great having it online as I live 350 miles from Christie's."

"Very informative supportive and uplifting. In the absence of not being able to arrange a face to face day, this was the next best thing."

"This was my first patient day and I am so impressed. It has given me a real lift and made me feel so much more empowered in my treatment and care."