Cancer Care Management

We work closely with other medical specialists and allied health professionals to ensure the best possible outcome for our cancer patients.

Our radiologists provide their expertise in interpreting scans and aiding us in the exact staging of patients.

Our radiation oncologists and medical oncologists also provide expertise to our patients who need radiotherapy and chemotherapy in the treatment of their cancers.

The speech and swallowing therapy team will work rigorously with you to obtain the best possible outcome for speech and swallowing. Additionally, you will also meet our dietician who will provide dietary advice before, during and after treatment. We also collaborate with the dental team to ensure your teeth are in optimal condition before embarking on radiotherapy.

Our aim is the same as yours: to fight off the cancer and to return you to an optimal quality of life.
**Introduction**

The diagnosis of cancer in a patient is often accompanied by disbelief, and feeling of helplessness. The feeling of helplessness is partly due to fear, lack of knowledge and little awareness of the many treatment options available.

This series of pamphlets aims to educate the reader about common head and neck cancers - how the condition presents in patients, symptoms they may experience, investigations that are required and treatment options available.

For more specific information, you are advised to seek a head and neck cancer specialist’s opinion for a face to face discussion of the condition.

**Nasopharyngeal Cancer**

Nasopharyngeal Cancer is the most common head and neck cancer we see in Singapore. It is the 8th most common cancer in males in Singapore, accounting for 3.7% of all cancers in males in Singapore from 2010 to 2014 (Singapore Cancer Registry, Interim Annual Report 2015). It is more common in men than in women and the incidence is also steadily dropping.

Nasopharyngeal cancers are associated with chronic consumption of preserved food and also may be related to infection with a virus (Epstein Barr virus). Patients with nasopharyngeal carcinoma may have a family history of the same cancer. Common symptoms include blood-stained saliva, lymph gland enlargement in the neck, nose blockage and decreased hearing.

**Examination and tests**

Your doctor will examine you and will perform nasoendoscopy, where a fibreoptic camera is placed through the nose to obtain a view of the back of the nose. The cancer arises at the back portion of the nose, just behind the Eustachian tube opening, a tube that connects the nose to the ear.

Two types of investigations are required:

(1) **Biopsy** of the back of the nose to determine the presence of cancer (this is done in the clinic quite painlessly).

(2) **Scans** to determine the extent of the disease. Scans performed commonly include Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan of the nose and neck to determine the extent of the tumour. A Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scan could be done as well to determine if the cancer has spread elsewhere, in particular whether it has spread to the lungs, liver or bones.

**Treatment**

The treatment of nasopharyngeal cancer depends on the stage of disease. Early stage nasopharyngeal cancers can be treated with radiotherapy only. Advanced stage nasopharyngeal cancers requires chemoradiotherapy.

**Cancer Patient Services**

The Department of Otorhinolaryngology (Ear, Nose, Throat) in Tan Tock Seng Hospital offers the following services in relation to head and neck cancers:

(1) **Diagnosis** of whether or not the patient has a head and neck cancer.

(2) **Appropriate staging** of the cancer.

(3) **Treatment** of the cancer. Every patient with cancer is discussed at our multidisciplinary tumour board, to work out what is the best treatment for you based upon the latest clinical evidence for each condition.

(4) **Long-term follow up and surveillance** to ensure the cancer does not return.