

Your medical team

This information is about the team of health professionals that plan and manage your lymphoma treatment and care. Together, they are known as a multidisciplinary team (MDT).

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What is a multidisciplinary team (MDT)?

A multidisciplinary team (MDT) is made up of different professionals, sometimes from more than one hospital. The exact make-up of the team can vary slightly from one hospital to another. However, your MDT members each have specialist knowledge in different areas to help offer you the best care and work towards the best outcomes. The team meets to discuss and plan your **treatment**, taking your individual needs, general health and preferences into account. Their decisions are further informed by national treatment guidelines.

Every patient with any form of blood (haematological) cancer should be cared for by a haemato-oncology multidisciplinary team. These multidisciplinary teams should be responsible not only for initial recommendations about what treatment should be offered, but also for delivery of treatment and long-term support for patients.

National Institute of Health and Care Excellence, 2020

The person who has overall responsibility for your care is a doctor who is either a **clinical oncologist** or a **consultant haematologist**. They work closely with the other members of the MDT.

The role of a key worker

Your key worker is someone within your MDT. You can contact them with any questions or concerns you might have about your lymphoma or treatment. Usually, your key worker is your lymphoma/haematology **clinical nurse specialist** (CNS). They are often the member of your MDT who helps to identify and address any issues that arise as a result of **living with lymphoma**. You might hear this referred to as a Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA).

You should be given the full name and contact details of your key worker. If you have not been given this information, you can ask your haematology doctor for it.

As a Clinical Nurse Specialist, I am a first point of contact for patients, their families and carers from the time of their diagnosis through the treatment phase and beyond. I provide a link between the patient and their medical team. I help people understand what is happening, answer questions and assess treatment related problems. I offer emotional support during anxious times and can refer on to other specialists as needed.

Barbara von Barsewisch, Haematology Clinical Nurse Specialist

Members of an MDT

You'll see some members of your MDT regularly, but there are others you won't meet, for example, those who work in a laboratory. There are also some professionals who'll only be involved in your care from time to time, as and when they're needed. These are sometimes called 'extended' members of the MDT.

Some professionals are known as allied health professionals (AHPs). They work in different specialities to doctors and nurses but are still involved in various ways with supporting your physical, social and **emotional wellbeing**.

Below, we outline the professionals that are likely to be involved in your treatment and care. These are often called 'core' members of the MDT.

Clinical nurse specialist or specialist nurse in lymphoma specialises in looking after people with lymphoma. They can help you understand more about the disease and its treatment. Your specialist nurse (sometimes called a clinical nurse specialist or CNS) is usually also your **key worker**. They can help you understand more **about lymphoma** and its **treatment**.

Clinical oncologist or clinical haematologist specialises in treating people who have cancer with treatments that don't involve surgery, such as or **radiotherapy** or **chemotherapy**.

Haematologist specialises in diseases of the blood, including lymphoma.

Pathologist looks at samples of your **biopsy** under a microscope and does tests on them to find out what **type of lymphoma** you have.

Pharmacists make sure that the treatment you receive is at the right dose for you. If you are taking medication for other conditions, they also ensure that your lymphoma treatment doesn't affect this.

Psychologists and counsellors can help with feelings and the **emotional impact** of your diagnosis and treatment.

Radiographer carries out **X-ray**, **MRI** and **CT** scans. Some radiographers also give **radiotherapy**.

Radiologist specialises in looking at **scans**, including **X-rays**, to work out what they mean. Radiologists also sometimes take biopsy samples to diagnose lymphoma.

You might also be supported by some or all of the following professionals, as members of the extended MDT:

Dietician can offer advice on what to **eat and drink**, particularly if you have difficulties with eating, for example, as a side effect of treatment.

Occupational therapist (OT) organises equipment to help you manage in your day-to-day life. This might include things such as stair-rails or bathing and showering aids.

Palliative care specialist aims to improve your quality of life in relation to a range of aspects, whether these are physical, psychological, social or spiritual needs. A key part of **palliative care** is in helping to control symptoms such as pain and sickness (**nausea**), whether or not you are having active treatment for your lymphoma.

Physiotherapist works with you to improve physical problems and manage pain. They use techniques such as exercises to help you build up your strength and range of movement. They might also assess you to help you stay safe and independent at home if you experience treatment related mobility problems.

Research nurse / clinical research practitioner can talk to you about **clinical trials**. If you take part in one, they are involved in checking your health and progress. You can also ask them any questions you might have.

Social worker can help with non-medical needs such as arranging for help with housework or giving information to help you find out about **financial support**.

Support worker works closely with your **keyworker** to help with the practical and emotional aspects of living with lymphoma. These might include concerns about **treatment side-effects** as well as matters like where to park when you go to medical appointments. They can help you access various sources of support, both within the hospital and elsewhere. They might refer you to benefit advisors for **financial support** or **complementary therapies**. A support worker might also help you to re-gain a sense of 'normality' and routine, particularly once you **finish treatment**.

Additional members of the MDT for children and young people

Children and **young people** aged 16 to 24 have an additional teenage and young adult multi-disciplinary team (TYA MDT). This team consists of health and social care professionals who specialise in treating young people with cancer.

The TYA MDT can advise health professionals within the hospital MDT of the specific needs of young adults to help ensure they get the most appropriate treatment, care and support.

Children and young people’s social worker helps address emotional, social and practical needs, for example financial, educational and employment issues.

Play specialist works with young children, using play to help them understand more about their diagnosis and treatment.

Young person’s community worker supports the wellbeing of a young person with cancer in their community. They help with building social connections and helping to manage issues relating to education and employment.

Youth support worker can arrange fun and relaxing activities on the hospital ward. They might also organise social outings away from the hospital environment. This role is sometimes called something else, such as a ‘youth support coordinator’.

Young lives vs cancer have more information about health professionals involved in care for children and young people.

References

The full list of references for this page is available on our website. Alternatively, email publications@lymphoma-action.org.uk or call 01296 619409 if you would like a copy.

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