Expanding the Concept of Presence During Radiation Therapy Treatment

Carol Thelen
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Evidence Based Practice Project Leader: Carol Thelen, RN, BSN

**Background**

- Radiation Oncology is an invasive invisible process often given during a time that both patients and their families feel considerable burden. 
- The acute phase of treatment after diagnosis is a time of uncertainty, fear and anxiety. The psychological impacts of this fear and anxiety reduce patient’s ability to take in all of the information they are given. 
- Families are often active participants in supporting patients as a second set of eyes and ears. 
- There are no national or organizational guidelines on family presence during radiation treatment. 
- Coborn Cancer Center’s practice is not consistent but generally included family waiting in the reception area.

**PICO Statement**

P (Population): Adult oncology patients undergoing radiation treatment 
I (Intervention): Observation of active radiation treatment by family/significant other 
C (Comparison): Current practice of waiting in lobby 
O (Outcome): Improved patient/family understanding and satisfaction related to observation experience, and staff and physician feedback

**Level of Evidence**

- ACCN levels of evidence used to evaluate articles. 
- Review of literature found no journal articles related to family presence during radiation oncology treatment. 
- 4 articles (Level C) and 1 article (Level E) described staff reactions to family presence during invasive procedures. 
- 100 Cancer Centers Surveyed. 
- In general, almost no radiation departments allowed this throughout the country. 
- Over ½ of the organizations thought this may benefit patients/families and would be very interested in results of a trial. 
- Expert team reviewed literature and survey results and developed guidelines based on evidence.

**Outcomes**

- Observations of patients during radiation therapy process. 
- Family presence as a positive experience during the treatment process. 
- Will monitor results in Performance Improvement measures.

![Pilot Pre Observation Patient Survey](August-January 2012)

Q1: Currently satisfied with family/significant other involvement in your medical care? 
Q2: Would family/significant other overall experience of observation be more satisfying? 
Q3: Interested in having family/significant other observe radiation treatment? 
Q4: Concerned about seeing you enter or existing treatment area? 

![Pilot Post Observation Patient/ Family Survey](August-January 2012)

Q1: Satisfied with family/significant other involvement in your medical care after observation? 
Q2: Family/significant other overall experience more satisfying after observation? 
Q3: Better understanding of how radiation process works? 
Q4: Confidentiality maintained during observation? 

**Practice Changes**

- Family and patient choice to observe radiation treatment. 
- Director or coordinator provide teaching pre observation and accompany family/ significant other. 
- Staff and family/ significant other complete survey post observation.

**Conclusions & Next Steps**

- Surveys suggest patients, families/ significant other’s found presence as a positive experience during the treatment process. 
- Staff reported decreased concerns about confidentiality, distraction and time concerns after the experience. 
- Working on formalizing policy and practice. 
- Will monitor results in Performance Improvement measures.

**References**


Project Participants: Derek Peterson, RN, BSN; Dr. Barbi Kaplan-Frenkel; Dr. André Mitchell; Jesse Belschner, Physicist; Cynthia Smith RT; Tamara Schultz, RT