PUTTING THE
DIGNITY AND
RESPECT OF PATIENTS FIRST

The General Election 2015
Ahead of the General Election, Macmillan is calling on all political parties to ensure:
• All patients, including cancer patients, are treated with the highest levels of dignity and respect
• NHS staff are supported to deliver this ambition.

Overall, the majority of people with cancer receive good, compassionate care from the NHS. However, as the Francis Inquiry Report into Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust highlighted, there are still too many people reporting a poor experience. To make sure cancer patients receive a positive experience, and are treated with the highest levels of dignity and respect, NHS staff must be supported to deliver the best possible care.

1. What is the problem affecting cancer patients?

Relational care such as communication, trusting nurses and being treated with dignity and respect, is essential for cancer patients. The findings of the 2014 National Cancer Patient Experience Survey and the 2013 Chemotherapy Experience Survey, identify the areas where cancer patients are being let down in England.

Are cancer patients being treated with the highest levels of dignity and respect?

- 40% of patients said that not all doctors and nurses had always asked them what name they prefer to be called by.
- 30% of patients said they didn’t have confidence and trust in every ward nurse treating them.
- 30% of patients receiving chemotherapy weren’t told they had a choice about having this treatment.

Are cancer patients being given adequate support?

- 44% of patients were not definitely told about side effects of treatment that could affect them in the future before starting treatment.
- 78% of patients (almost four out of five) weren’t offered a written assessment or care plan.
- 41% of patients weren’t definitely given enough care and help from health or social services after leaving hospital.
- 46% of patients receiving chemotherapy didn’t get the opportunity to talk about practical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and financial concerns.
- > 30% of patients were not definitely told about the financial help or benefits they might be entitled to.
There is also significant variation in cancer patient experience across the country\textsuperscript{12}. 

The percentage of patients who felt that after leaving hospital, they were definitely given enough care and help from health or social services.

- **31% - 52%**
- **53% - 59%**
- **60% - 63%**
- **64% - 79%**
- **No data available**

\textbf{Evidence also suggests that there are significant inequalities in patient experience}\textsuperscript{13,14}.

The following groups report poorer experiences of care:

- patients affected by rarer cancers such as urological, brain and central nervous system.
- younger patients, who tend to report more negative experiences across a number of different elements of patient experience
- ethnic minorities, Chinese patients report the worst experiences, followed by Asian and black patients
- women, who tend to report more critical experiences of care across most elements of experience
- patients treated by London hospitals\textsuperscript{15} compared with those treated by hospitals in other English regions.

These figures show that not every cancer patient is receiving the highest levels of dignity and respect which they deserve.

\textbf{‘I wish I’d had the courage to voice my fears and concerns when I was facing treatment. My partner and I would have been far better prepared emotionally to face what was to come. I had to learn the answers the hard way, as I went along.’} 

Simon, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer, Dorset
2. What is the problem affecting NHS staff?

Evidence suggests that NHS staff wellbeing is the foundation on which compassionate care must be built. Yet the 2013 NHS Staff Survey shows a significant proportion of staff are having a poor experience.

What are NHS staff’s views on their place of work and management?

- 58% of NHS staff would recommend their organisation as a place to work.
- 51% of NHS staff haven’t received training in how to deliver a good patient/service user experience in the past 12 months.
- 41% of all NHS staff were satisfied with the extent to which they felt their hospital trust values their work.
- Although 84% of NHS staff receive appraisals, only 38% of staff said these were well structured.
- 54% said that their appraisal helped them improve how they do their job.
- 36% said communication between senior managers and staff is effective.
- 28% of all NHS staff reported that senior managers act on feedback from staff.

What are NHS staff saying about their health and wellbeing?

- 68% of NHS staff reported that they had attended work in the previous three months despite not feeling well enough to perform duties.
- 91% of those who’d attended work while unwell stated that they had put themselves under pressure to attend.
- 32% who’d attended work while unwell felt under pressure to attend from their manager.
- 23% who’d attended work while unwell felt under pressure to attend from other colleagues.
- 39% of NHS staff reported feeling unwell as a result of work-related stress in the past 12 months.

Macmillan’s research on this issue also shows that the treatment of NHS staff is linked to patient experience. Happy NHS staff mean happy patients.

‘I’ve always loved coming into work. I love my job. I love that every day I come into work, even though I’m doing the same job of administering chemotherapy, we’re treating different patients every day. They’re all different – we treat them all as individuals.’

Mark, senior nurse, Hertfordshire
Conversely, where NHS staff suffer high levels of discrimination or harassment, cancer patients are up to 18 times more likely to receive poor care.  

Results from 2014 survey with 204 healthcare professionals.  

- 76% said that the government is not doing enough to support NHS staff to build a culture of care where patients are the priority.  
- 93% agreed that well-treated staff treat patients well.  
- 77% reported experiencing an unmanageable workload.  
- 56% reported experiencing no control or influence over their work.  
- 92% of the above group also said that this is a barrier to them providing a good patient experience.  
- 83% said that NHS staff need more support from managers to treat cancer patients with the highest levels of dignity and respect.  
- 51% of healthcare professionals said that senior leaders don't prioritise staff health and wellbeing in their organisation.  

The results from the 2014 survey of health professionals above show that NHS staff need to be supported to deliver the best possible care to cancer patients. This will also contribute towards realising Robert Francis’s vision of a common culture of care where patients are at the heart of the health service.
3. What are the solutions?

This briefing paper shows much more needs to be done to ensure all cancer patients are treated with the highest levels of dignity and respect. It also highlights that national leadership is needed to support NHS staff to deliver the best possible care to cancer patients. In light of this, Macmillan is calling on all political parties to commit to:

• Actively shine a light on poor care and demand that hospitals take action to improve patient experience and staff engagement by:
  • Publishing a clear comparison of cancer patient experience in hospital trusts across the country.
  • Requiring trusts to publish action plans addressing weaknesses in cancer patient experience and staff engagement, and reporting annually on their progress.
  • Making sure all frontline NHS staff have time to access training to deliver care with dignity and respect. This could include courses on advanced communication skills to have sensitive conversations with cancer patients, their families and carers.

Help us raise standards of cancer care

We would be extremely grateful if you could write to the leadership of your party responsible for policy development raising Macmillan’s calls ahead of the General Election. Naturally, Macmillan can offer wording for this letter and provide suggested questions.

Ahead of the General Election 2015, Macmillan is also calling on political parties to commit to deliver cancer outcomes that match the best in Europe. We also want them to make sure everyone at the end of life is given free social care to support them in spending their final days in their place of choosing.
References

19 Research Now/Macmillan Cancer Support online survey of 204 health professionals who deal with cancer patients (GPs, oncology consultants, oncology nurses, and healthcare assistants). Fieldwork conducted June 2014. Survey results are unweighted.
Five years from now half of us will face cancer during our lives. The UK is already failing to support everyone with cancer. And this will only get worse as the number of people with cancer soars. We need urgent political action to change this.

We must act now so everyone with cancer is diagnosed early and receives the best possible treatment and support. We must demand health services that support, comfort and protect the dignity of everyone affected. We must also make it possible for each person to die in the place of their choice.

The election is our chance to make sure improving cancer care is a priority for the next government. It’s your time to choose.

Join our campaign to make cancer care an election priority and avoid a cancer care crisis.

Find out more at macmillan.org.uk/GeneralElection2015

Together we can choose a future where no one has to face cancer alone.