

3 Appropriate for patients with metastatic breast cancer to have access to effective pain and symptom management and psychosocial support, including multidisciplinary supportive and palliative care services when required.

WHAT THIS PRACTICE IS ABOUT

This practice highlights the importance of making sure that people with metastatic breast cancer get the care and support they need, when they need it.

People with metastatic breast cancer may need help managing:

- physical symptoms, such as pain, nausea, constipation or poor appetite
- emotional issues, such as distress or anxiety related to the cancer (including support for family members)
- practical issues, such as work, travel or costs of care.

Support can be provided by different health professionals and services. Getting help early can reduce distress and improve quality of life.

One of the services that can help in the care of people with metastatic breast cancer is palliative care. A palliative care team or service can help people manage physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Palliative care is not only for people who are nearing the end of life. It is an option for everyone with advanced cancer, and services can be used when needed.

Early involvement of palliative care services in the care of people with advanced cancer has been shown to improve quality of life and satisfaction with care, reduce symptoms such as pain and depression, and deliver care according to individual needs and preferences.

WHY THIS PRACTICE MIGHT BE IMPORTANT FOR YOU

It is important that you have the support you need to help you manage symptoms of metastatic breast cancer and its treatment. If your symptoms are controlled, it is likely that you will continue treatment for longer. You may need help managing physical symptoms, such as pain or feelings such as distress or anxiety. You may also need practical help with day-to-day activities.

Different members of your team can help. Support from a nurse, psychologist, counsellor or social worker, may be helpful for you and your family. A palliative care team can help you manage symptoms and provide you with support. Remember that palliative care is not just for people at the end of their life. You can use the services of a palliative care team when you need extra help and stop when you are feeling OK.

Getting the help and support you need can help with your quality of life. The important thing is to let your health professionals know about your symptoms and any feelings or practical concerns that are affecting your day-to-day life. This includes telling your team if your symptoms change over time.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Who can I talk to about how I'm feeling?

Who can I talk to about how to manage pain or other symptoms?

Who should I talk to if I have a new symptom or if my symptoms change?

How could a palliative care team help my family and me?

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about asking questions and getting the right help and support, you may find it helpful to read *Finding the words: Starting a conversation when your cancer has progressed.*



Australian Government
Cancer Australia

canceraustralia.gov.au/statement

Influencing best practice in metastatic breast cancer

Metastatic breast cancer is cancer that has spread from the breast to other parts of the body. It is also known as advanced breast cancer or secondary breast cancer. People with metastatic breast cancer experience a range of emotional, physical and practical challenges.

The aim of treatment and care for people with metastatic breast cancer is to control the growth and spread of the cancer, relieve symptoms and help people live as well as possible. There is evidence that approaches to treatment and care vary across Australia.

It is important that everyone with metastatic breast cancer receives evidence-based information, treatment and support that reflect their individual needs and preferences. This includes avoiding treatments that may not provide meaningful benefits or may cause harm.

ABOUT THE STATEMENT

The aim of the *Cancer Australia Statement – Influencing best practice in metastatic breast cancer* is to reduce unwarranted variation in the treatment and care of people with metastatic breast cancer in Australia.

The Statement focuses on 10 practices that have been identified as appropriate or inappropriate in the treatment and care of people with metastatic breast cancer, to help them to live as well as possible. This includes providing the treatment and care that is most likely to benefit the patient, and avoiding treatments that are unlikely to help, or that may be harmful.

Not every practice is relevant for every person diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer. The practice(s) relevant to an individual will depend on their diagnosis and situation.

HOW WAS THE STATEMENT DEVELOPED?

The Statement is based on available national and international evidence and was developed with input from a range of experts and people affected by metastatic breast cancer. The Statement has the support of key clinical colleges, cancer and consumer organisations.

USING THE STATEMENT

The Statement aims to empower people with metastatic breast cancer and their families to make informed decisions about treatment and care that are right for them. A key part of informed decision making is to talk to health professionals and ask questions about available options for treatment, care and support.

You may wish to talk to your health professionals about which practices in the Statement are most relevant for you. Each practice includes a few questions that you may find helpful to guide conversations about your treatment and care options.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the *Cancer Australia Statement – Influencing best practice in metastatic breast cancer* and to access supporting resources, visit **Cancer Australia** website.



Australian Government
Cancer Australia

canceraustralia.gov.au/statement