

Action Radiotherapy Flash Survey 24-27th April 2020

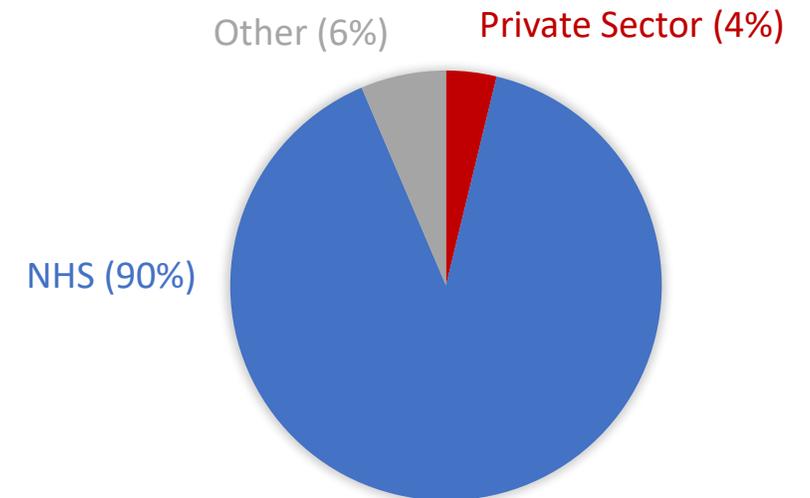
Global Coalition for Radiotherapy Meeting
05.05.20

Aim of the flash survey

The charity Action Radiotherapy undertook a flash survey (google survey) of on the ground radiotherapy professionals, between 24-27th April 2020, following the changes made within the NHS, in response to Covid-19 pandemic. Daily News/twitter <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG162> issued 28 March 2020. Principle of RADS: Remote, Avoid, Defer, Shorten. Decisions at Institutional level. RCR provide evidence base for shortened fractionation. Patients already in cancer pathway.

Who Responded?

- 90% of respondents worked for the NHS and represented all parts of the country and devolved nations
- 80% of respondents were therapeutic radiographers (who make up half of the workforce)
- 22 radiotherapy service managers responded
- 8% of responses were from staff at satellite centres



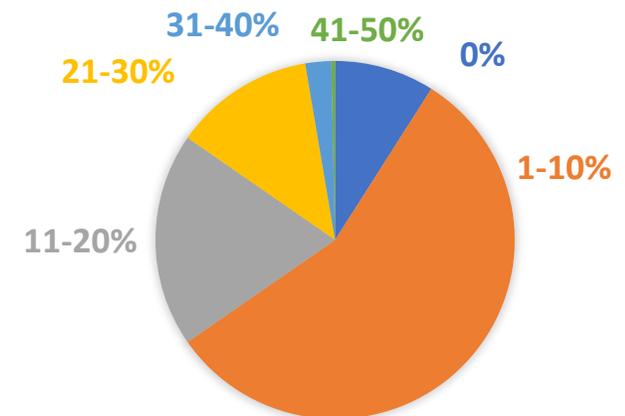
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- **2%** reported **no access** to appropriate PPE, with only 31% of respondents claiming to have excellent access to appropriate PPE
- **76%** were concerned that they may **contract or pass on Covid-19** due to lack of appropriate PPE, with **10%** being extremely concerned.

Workforce - Self Isolation and Sickness

- **56%** of responders reported they had up to 10% of their team currently away due to self-isolation or sickness.
- Only 9% reported that currently, no staff were absent from work.

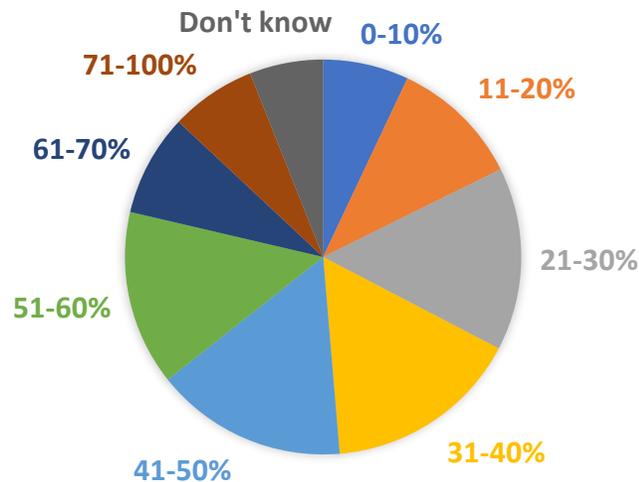
Approximately how many of the team are currently away due to self-isolation or sickness?



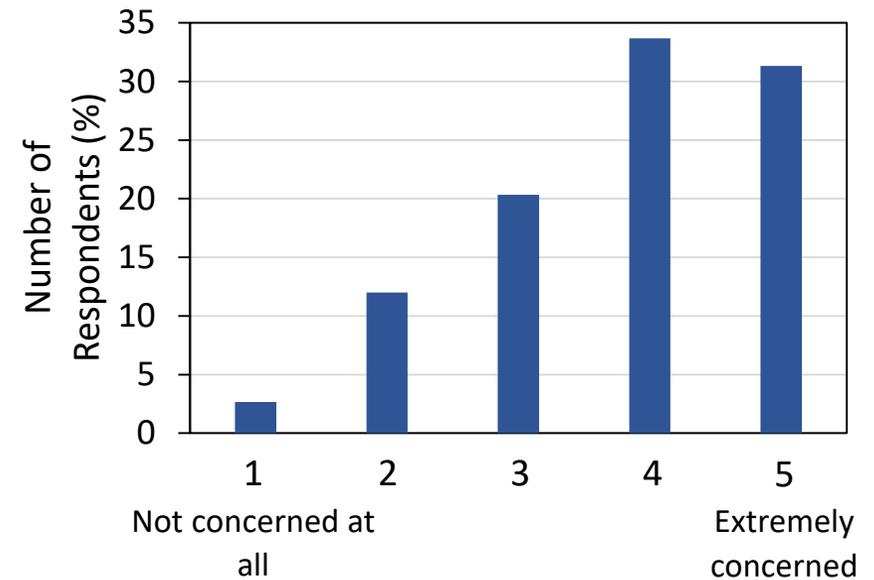
Treatment Disruption

- **61%** reported between **21-60%** of patient treatments disrupted.
- **65%** of respondents were either **concerned** or **extremely concerned** about these disruptions.

Approximately what percentage of patients at your department have had their radiotherapy treatments disrupted, altered or postponed?



How concerned are you about patients' treatment being delayed or disrupted at your centre?



Changes in machine capacity following the guidance

This was measured by changes in estimated daily spare hours of machine capacity. 80% of responders were working at full capacity (0-1 hour a day spare machine time) prior to the pandemic. However, now after the introduction of the guidance only **26%** were working at full capacity and the range of spare capacity was from up to **100 hours** a day.

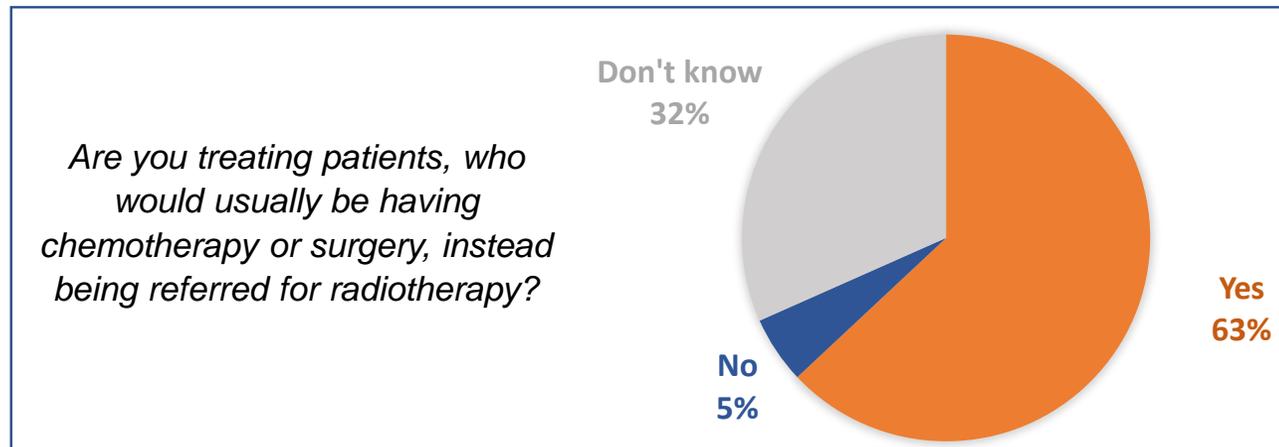
| | Before Covid-19 | Since Covid-19 |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Average spare machine capacity per day (hours) | 1.2 | 5.8 |
| Range of spare machine capacity per day (hours) | 0-30 | 0-100 |

Percentage of prostate cancer patients having treatment delayed

- Prostate cancer treatment makes up around 30% of the workload of a radiotherapy department.
- Prostate cancer treatment (in patients having neoadjuvant hormone therapy) was assigned the lowest priority (5) in the guidelines.
- On average **97%** of respondents reported at least some prostate cancer patients had had their treatment delayed for 1-6 months while only **3%** reported no delays and **20%** reported 100% of patients were being delayed.

Cancer treatments transferred to radiotherapy

63% of responders said they had been asked to treat additional patients who would normally be treated by chemotherapy and surgery. This included lung cancer patients referred for SABR, head and neck cancer through a range of other sites such as brain and pancreas and oesophagus to palliative treatment.



Easy of introduction of shorter treatment techniques as recommended in NICE guidelines

3 responders were unable to introduce Fast forward for breast cancer while **80%** had already done so.

36% had not been able to introduce advanced radiotherapy with SBRT with **17%** saying they were unable to do so.

IT Infrastructure

Respondents were asked about IT infrastructure and how it can support remote working, radiotherapy planning and networking

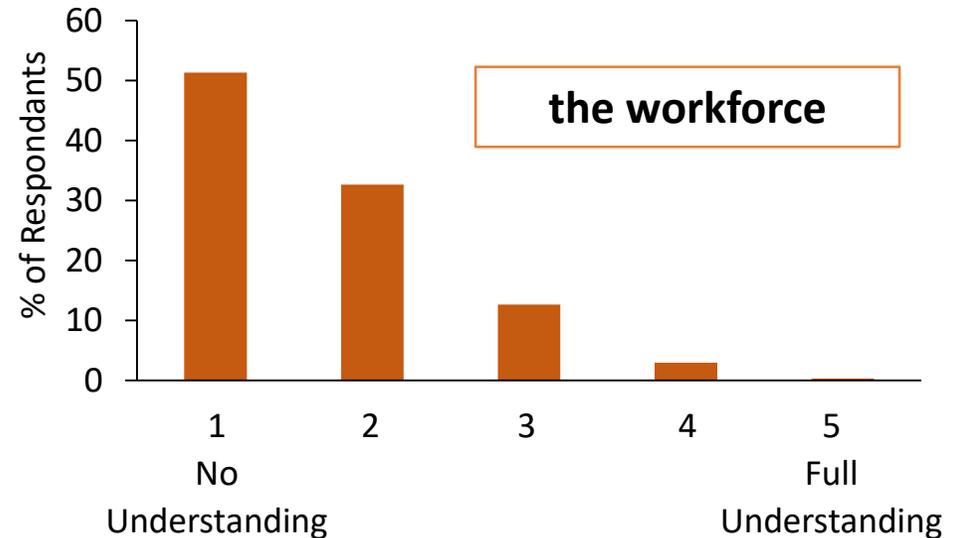
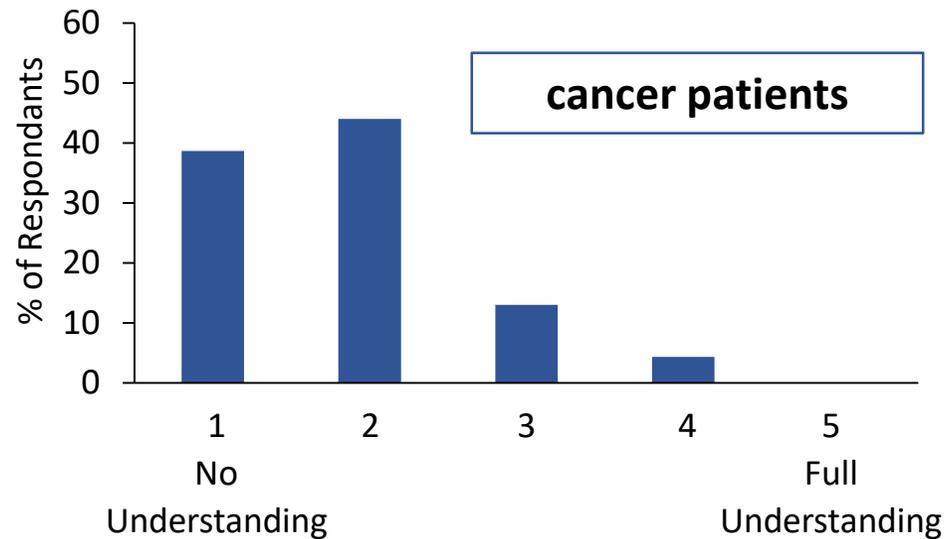
24% of responders reported poor or very poor IT infrastructure

Patient Transport

The charity in the first weeks of lockdown, had heard reports of extreme difficulties with transport as volunteers self-isolated and patients needed individual transport. Trusts had even approached the military for assistance. Since the delays and cancellations of treatments transport has become less of an acute problem, however 30% of respondents did report difficulties. The main concern was the disappearance of charity and voluntary transport.

Government and Senior NHS Management

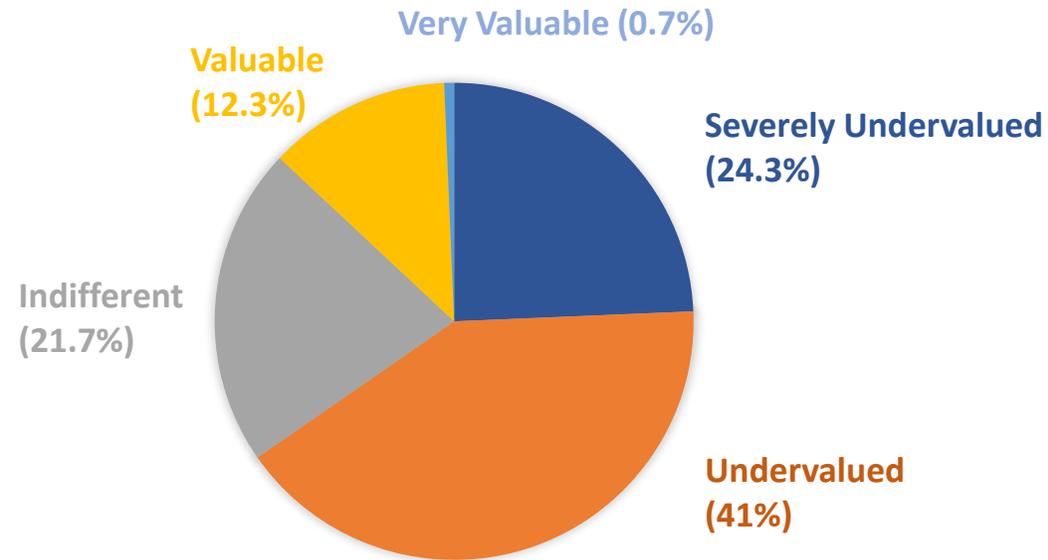
Do you feel that the Government understand the impact of the current situation in radiotherapy, on cancer patients and the workforce?



As well as feeling like the Government didn't understand the effect of Covid-19 on radiotherapy patients and the radiotherapy workforce, most people felt like the radiotherapy service is undervalued by the Government and the NHS. **69%** responded that senior NHS managers do not understand the impact on the workforce and **53%** replied that senior NHS management have no or little understanding of the impact to cancer patients.

Morale

How do you think senior policy makers in Government and the NHS rate the value of the radiotherapy service?



The morale of the workforce has been affected by the current crisis with more than half reporting morale to be lower

Compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic, how is overall morale?

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| A lot lower | 11.7% |
| Lower | 41% |
| No difference | 26.3% |
| Higher | 20.3% |
| A lot higher | 0.7% |

Free Text Response

“ ...We are still carrying on. The world has stopped but our patients and us are still coming into the hospital on a daily basis, frightened, to try and hope that their life becomes better. We are doing this for the benefit of our patients with very little value or respect We have had to fight to get our PPE, we have had to fight and are still fighting to get IPC to attend our department, like we are not an important role.... We are still here fighting ...for our patients...we are still here”.

“so many people are not getting the treatment they desperately need”

“The street cleaners in China, who are spraying the streets with disinfectant have better PPE than I do. The government is expecting us to risk our lives and the lives of our families to do our jobs. If they were in my shoes I'd like to see how willing they would be to turn up to work and risk their lives for the benefit of others.”