



## Palliative Radiation Therapy

**Consideration** for Palliative Radiation Therapy should be given to those with:

- Pain related to bone metastases
- Headache and neurological symptoms related to brain metastases
- Dyspnea related to tumour obstruction of bronchus
- Bleeding related to tumours in lung, skin, bladder, or stomach
- Obstruction of esophagus
- Oncological emergencies: spinal cord compress and superior vena cava syndrome

**Palliative Radiation Therapy is one of the most effective treatments for malignant bone pain and for masses causing neuropathic pain (e.g. brachial plexus masses).**

To **improve quality of life**, individuals suffering from these symptoms should **be assessed by a radiation oncologist** who will decide if radiation treatment will be of benefit. It may take only a single radiation treatment to make a difference.

Palliative Radiation Therapy may mean **fewer opioids** are required for pain management. It may mean **improved function** with less pain, less dyspnea, or reduced bleeding. Pain relief can start in 5 to 10 days but may take up to four weeks to be fully manifested, and it may last for months.

The **illness trajectory** and **goals of care** need to be kept in mind when considering Palliative Radiation Therapy, as the full effect may not be possible for someone nearing end of life.

### Sources:

- Pereira JL, Associates. The Pallium Palliative Pocketbook: a peer-reviewed, referenced resource. 1<sup>st</sup> Cdn ed. Edmonton, Canada: Pallium Canada; 2008. 3<sup>rd</sup> Printing 2013.
- Palliative Care Formulary, Canadian Edition, 2010.
- 1 Jones et al.(2014). Palliative Radiotherapy at the End of Life: A Critical Review.

### Circumstances in which Palliative Radiation Therapy may not be Indicated

- Death is imminent
- Multiple progressive symptoms
- Inability to provide informed consent
- Transportation is impossible
- Potential side effect risks outweigh potential benefit
- Retreatment exceeds normal tissue tolerance
- Required course would be too lengthy <sup>(1)</sup>