

Office of the Director General Health Care Services - Cancer Care Pathways Directorate Structure, Functions and Responsibilities Functions.

The Cancer Care Pathways Directorate was established in October 2014 with the aim of promoting advancement in quality cancer care and to offer support, advice, timely access, coordination and continuity of care for cancer patients. As part of its pathway, aspects of patient needs must be continuously assessed as cancer has several implications on the family life, social life and consequently society in general.

Cancer Care spans the whole patient pathway from screening or initial referral for a symptom to cancer diagnosis to treatment followed by survivorship, palliative care or end-of-life care and therefore, this requires continuous improvements in patients' experiences and outcomes across the cancer journey. On an organizational level, the Cancer Care Pathways Directorate aims to illustrate patient processes through the different phases of the cancer pathways for different cancers with the aim of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the current service provision and improve pathways of care. This information is then passed on to policy and decision makers, stakeholders and institutions. Such research initiatives provide assistance to the Director General (Health Care Services) and other key stakeholders by contributing the necessary evidence in the formulation of policy and national strategy in the area of cancer care.

Aims and Responsibilities of the Cancer Care Pathways Directorate

This directorate provides the following services:

- Provides Fast Tracking Services so that referrals of suspected cancer sent by General Practitioners are fast-tracked to a timely appointment for their first Consultation at hospital;
- Provides Nurse Navigation services whereby expert Oncology Navigator nurses assess newly diagnosed cancer patients to identify any challenges, unmet needs and service gaps assisting the patients and their families to overcome barriers to care so as to receive timely care and treatment. They also may recommend initiatives or amendments to procedures or cancer pathways as required towards improving care coordination and continuity of care for cancer patients and their families and to improve quality and timely care;
- Provides Survivorship services to assess the unmet holistic needs of patients and their families during the post-treatment stage and beyond cancer. The Survivorship Coordinator provides assistance according the needs identified and organizes wellness/rehabilitation classes/programs to assist patients and families to cope and adapt with changes due the cancer experience;
- Carries out research and audits to provide evidence regarding timelines for cancer pathways to provide the necessary recommendations and direction for implementing care coordination and other service improvements;
- Improves coordination of care for metastatic and palliative patients;
- Helps to improve communication and networking between various organisations / hospitals / entities / programmes;
- The Cancer Care Pathways Directorate also develops information booklets and improves patient information in the treatment stage and any other information gaps in cancer services;
- Identifies barriers to screening programmes to increase uptake rates;
- Communicates relevant results and reports from the above initiatives to key stakeholders.

The Cancer Care Pathways Directorate Team currently consists of:

- The Director
- a Senior Practice Nurse
- Staff Nurse

- two Colorectal Nurse Navigators, a Lung Nurse Navigator, a Urology Nurse Navigator, a Gynae Nurse Navigator
- a Nurse Survivorship Coordinator
- a Fast Track Coordinator
- A clerk

The Directorate currently is also in the process of recruiting more personnel to build the structure and services of the directorate.

Description of all manuals and similar types of documents which contain policies, principles or rules or guidelines in accordance with which decisions or recommendations are made in respect of members of the Public: Cancer Care Pathways policy for data requests does not fall under the FOI Act Addressing requests in terms of the Freedom of Information Act Members of the public requesting documents through the FOI Act are to forward such requests to foi.healthservices@gov.mt.