

# The role of the pituitary multidisciplinary team (MDT)

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

This booklet has been designed to give you information about the medical team responsible for your treatment. We hope it will answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have at this time. This booklet is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your consultant, but to help you to understand more about what is discussed.

### The pituitary gland

The pituitary gland sits below the base of the brain and behind the bridge of the nose, close to the optic nerves in a space called the pituitary fossa, which is the size of a pea. Problems with the pituitary gland may happen when there is a tumour of the gland or when the gland becomes inflamed.

It is important to remember that if you have been diagnosed with a pituitary tumour, the vast majority of pituitary tumours are benign (non-cancerous). Nevertheless, you may feel overwhelmed, particularly regarding investigations and treatment options. It is likely that you will have many questions you would like to ask. We will strive to offer you the best possible treatment and care.

### What happens if I have been diagnosed with a pituitary condition?

You may have further tests to confirm the diagnosis and/or learn more about your pituitary condition. Many of the investigations will be done as an outpatient (which means that you will not need to stay in hospital overnight). However, some investigations may require a short hospital stay, usually in a special ward (called a planned investigation unit) where there are staff with expertise in performing these specialist tests. Your consultant and endocrine specialist nurse will talk to you about any tests you might need as and when they are required.

Once your diagnosis is confirmed, we will discuss your case at a multidisciplinary team (MDT) meeting and decide the best treatment option for you.

### What is the pituitary multidisciplinary team (MDT) and what do they do?

Following your recent diagnosis of a pituitary disease, you will receive support and treatment from the MDT. The team consists of doctors, nurses and other professionals who work together to provide an assessment and plan for your care that is appropriate for you. The members of the MDT meet every week to discuss people with a new diagnosis and to review those who have previously been

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diagnosed with a pituitary disease. The aim of the meetings is to decide on the appropriate treatment plan for each individual

Due to the nature of your disease, there may be a number of investigations and treatment options available and more than one specialist is likely to be involved in your care. It is essential that everyone involved in the assessment and planning of your care can share their expertise and understanding about your case, even though you will not personally meet all the members of this team.

Your consultant and the medical team will discuss any decisions with you and your family in the clinic at the next visit and will answer any questions you have on the benefits and risks of your treatment options. Your GP will also be sent a summary of your agreed treatment plan. If you would like a copy of this please let your consultant know.

The MDT is made up of the following key professionals who care for patients with pituitary disease:

### **Endocrinologist**

Endocrinologists are specially trained doctors in disease that affect glands. A gland is a group of cells which produce a chemical messenger released in the body called a hormone. Hormones control lots of processes in our bodies, including how we use and store energy, the volume of fluid and the levels of salts and sugar in the blood. The pituitary gland is sometimes called the 'master gland' because it produces some very important hormones that control all the other glands in the body. Depending on the type of pituitary disease you have, the pituitary gland can make too much or too little of certain hormones.

### **Pituitary surgeon**

A pituitary surgeon is a neurosurgeon (a surgeon who is a specialist in operating on the nervous system) who has further expertise in performing operations on the pituitary gland. Depending on the size of the pituitary tumour and the type of hormone it is producing, you may require an operation to remove it.

### **Neuroradiologist**

A radiologist is a doctor who is an expert in interpreting scans and X-rays. Neuroradiologists have further expertise in interpreting scans and X-rays done on the brain and nervous system which includes the pituitary gland. The best way to look at a pituitary tumour or other pituitary diseases is to perform a pituitary scan called an MRI scan (magnetic resonance imaging). This is a scan that uses magnetism to build up a picture of the organs inside the body. It is completely painless, rather noisy and involves lying still on a bed in a long tube for a short period.

### **Histopathologist**

This is a specialist doctor who uses a microscope to examine the cells of the pituitary tissue that were removed during an operation. He/she can detect features of cell structure which reveal disease. He/she will then write a report for doctors that give details of the findings.

### **Radiotherapist and clinical oncologist**

A radiotherapist is a doctor who specialises in treating tumours and cancers with radiation. In the UK, radiotherapists who are also specialists in using chemotherapy and other drug treatments for cancer are called clinical oncologists. Although pituitary tumours are not usually cancerous, sometimes radiotherapy (high energy X-ray treatment) is needed to reduce the growth of the tumour.

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### **Endocrine specialist nurse**

The endocrine specialist nurse is available if you need information and advice about your condition and treatments and to help if you are having difficulties with other things such as taking time from work for your appointments.

### **MDT coordinator**

The MDT coordinator provides administrative support and prepares information for the weekly multidisciplinary team meetings.

### **Keyworker**

The keyworker acts as a point of contact for you and your family throughout your treatment providing help and advice where needed. For pituitary disease, this is usually the endocrine specialist nurse or your named consultant endocrinologist. He/she will be very familiar with your case to coordinate your care. He/she will also plan your assessments and investigations, and ensure that findings from those investigations and care plans are communicated to other healthcare professionals involved in your care.

## **What type of treatment will I receive?**

Depending on the type of your disease, the team may offer you one or a combination of the following treatments:

- Medication – this can be a tablet or injection to lower your hormone levels if they are too high. In some cases, you may not be producing enough of certain hormones. If this is the case, these will be replaced by taking medication
- Surgery
- Radiotherapy

Your doctor or endocrine specialist nurse will provide you with the written information about the above treatment options.

## **Do I have to accept the treatment plan?**

No. This is your decision and we need your consent before any treatment is started. It is, however, the treatment which the specialists think would be most appropriate for you. Other options will be discussed with you and we will give you time to consider these further before you make a final decision.

## **Where will I have my treatment?**

You will have your treatment at one of the following three sites: Charing Cross, St Mary's or Hammersmith hospitals. Your consultant will inform you which hospital you will have your treatment at. We will also provide you with a map and explain exactly where it is that you need to go. Your outpatient appointments will be scheduled between Monday and Friday.

**Please remember to bring any medications you are taking with you to all your visits.**

If you would like to reschedule your appointment or have any queries regarding the appointment dates, please contact the outpatient booking centre at Charing Cross Hospital on 020 3313 5000.

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## Can I bring someone with me to my outpatient appointments?

Yes. It might be reassuring to have a relative or a friend with you.

## What if I have more questions?

You are welcome to ask any questions you may have about your treatment or care at any time. You may find it useful to keep a notebook handy to write down questions as you think of them. The team will be happy to try to answer any of your queries.

## Who will be looking after me?

**Name of your consultant:** .....

Name of his/her secretary: .....

Telephone: .....

**Name of your endocrine nurse specialist:** .....

Telephone: .....

Email: .....

### Other team members involved in your care:

Name of the team member: .....

Telephone: .....

Job title: .....

Name of the team member: .....

Telephone: .....

Job title: .....

## Notes and questions

Please use the space below to write down any questions that you would like to ask, or to make notes.

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## Useful contact numbers

**Please do not hesitate to contact your doctor, endocrine nurse specialist or key worker if you have any concerns about your situation, or if you have any questions about information in this leaflet.**

If you are calling out of hours, please leave a message on the answerphone and a team member will get back to you as soon as possible. **In an emergency, please contact your own GP.**

**Switchboard:** Charing Cross Hospital 020 3311 1234

Hammersmith Hospital 020 3313 1000

St Mary's Hospital 020 3312 6666

**Endocrine team secretary:** 020 3311 1065 (Charing Cross Hospital)

020 3313 4823 (Hammersmith Hospital)

**Information for patients and healthcare professionals** (including downloadable information leaflets):

[www.imperialendo.com](http://www.imperialendo.com)

### **National support group**

The Pituitary Foundation

PO Box 1944

Bristol

BS99 2UB

[www.pituitary.org.uk](http://www.pituitary.org.uk)

Administration line: 0845 450 0376

Fax: 0117 933 0910

Support and information helpline: 0845 450 0375 (Monday to Friday, between 09.00 and 17.00).

Endocrine nurse helpline: 0845 450 0377 (Monday evenings from 17.30 to 21.30 and Thursday mornings from 09.00 to 13.00)

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## How do I make a comment about my treatment?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any questions you may have. However, if your experience of our services does not meet your expectations and you would like to speak to someone other than staff caring for you, please contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on 020 3313 3322 or 020 3133 0088 (Charing Cross and Hammersmith hospitals), or 020 3312 7777 (St Mary's Hospital). You can also email PALS at [pals@imperial.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@imperial.nhs.uk). The PALS team are able to listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and are often able to help sort out problems on behalf of patients.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to:

The chief executive  
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust  
Trust Headquarters  
The Bays, South Wharf Road  
London W2 1NY

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please contact the communications directorate on 020 3312 5592.