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Dear Colleague,

Head and Neck Measures for the Manual for Cancer Services 2008

I am writing to let you know the Head and Neck Measures are being issued today as part of the Manual for Cancer Services 2008. A copy of the measures can be found in the Cancer Section on the Department of Health web-site www.dh.gov.uk or the CQuINS web-site www.cquins.nhs.uk.

Hard copies of the Head and Neck Measures will be distributed within the next few weeks.

The Purpose of the Manual for Cancer Services

The Manual of Cancer Services is an integral part of the NHS Cancer Reform Strategy (2007). It supports the quality assurance of cancer services and enables quality improvement in the commissioning and delivery of cancer services.

Development of the Manual of Cancer Services and the continuation of a revised peer review process, which was implemented at the beginning of 2009, has been supported by the service and agreed by Strategic Health Authorities following a review of all national programmes in 2007. The measures contained within this manual are an integral part of the review process.

Improving Outcomes Guidance (IOG) on cancer services now covers the vast majority of all cancers. The Manual has been drawn up to incorporate the recommendations contained within such guidance including the new guidelines published by NICE. It identifies the characteristics of service that are likely to have a significant impact on health outcomes. It is intended that those characteristics should help those involved in planning, commissioning, organising, and providing cancer services to identify gaps in provision and check

the appropriateness and quality of existing services. The measures provide a ready specification for the commissioning of cancer services within a given locality.

The National Cancer Peer Review Programme, which is led by the National Cancer Action Team and includes expert clinical and user representation, provides important information about the quality of cancer services across the country and supports the development of leadership, self regulation and governance.

The revised peer review programme has adopted an annual self assessment process supported by a targeted visit programme. This annual process will allow more up to date information to be available to support the commissioning of cancer services and patient choice.

The development of cancer measures is in order to:

- Reflect new NICE guidance and revisions to existing NICE guidance.
- Allow greater influence by users of cancer services and their carers.
- Take account of possible modifications to measures following peer review visits.
- Ensure the scope of measures encompasses the broader implementation of the Cancer Reform Strategy, including actions to support the development of world class commissioning of cancer services and supports the development of leadership and governance.

There is a clear commitment to the establishment of an active and positive relationship with the Care Quality Commission and information gathered from the National Cancer Peer Review Programme will be shared with the Commission. The Care Quality Commission plays an important role in assessing the quality of cancer services and peer review continues to be committed to working in partnership with that organisation to support continued improvements in cancer services.

I should be grateful for your help in bringing the publication of the Head and Neck Measures to the attention of all those in your organisation who are involved in the commissioning or provision of cancer services.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Parsons
Director
National Cancer Action Team