

Editorial

We are pleased to present the fourth issue of the third volume of the Journal of Radiotherapy in Practice. In the last issue, we published abstracts from papers presented at the Radiotherapy in Practice Conference, held in Sheffield, September 2003. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the speakers for their presentations, the 200 delegates who attended for their contribution, in particular, those delegates who took the time to comment so positively on the range and quality of subjects presented at the Conference.

Yet again, the papers published in this issue contribute to our understanding and the knowledge base of radiotherapy and the patient experience. The themes range from an evaluation of patient's experience and service improvements, methods to improve quality of life for patients on treatment and some strong evidence to suggest the need to improve quality assurance of treatment delivery and recommendations for the reassessment of protocols for the treatment of brain metastasis.

It is evident from these papers that even though we are working in the early 21st century we still need to strive to find better methods for localisation and delivery of radiotherapy as we attempt to harness the developing, complex new technologies to best effect. The emerging scientific knowledge continues to impact on the way in which we implement change, however we still have a long way to go. There is a real need to consider and empower patients undergoing complex treatments and ensure their information needs are met.

In the first paper, Owens, Kelsey and White present their research and findings, which explore the views and experiences of men who have experienced external beam radiotherapy for prostate cancer. Their findings make very interesting reading and provide an insight into patients needs for information and support. Their findings will provide invaluable information for health care professionals on meeting the needs of these patients.

For those of you who usually avoid reading about IMRT the second and third articles are an essential read. Both articles are by the same authors. In part 1; Baker and Hardy review the provision of IMRT in the UK and the process of implementation and utilisation of IMRT, they

highlight those aspects that represent a significant change in practice or approach. In part 2, the authors establish the extent of implementation of IMRT in the UK and planned expansion, highlighting the obstacles to implementation. After reading the articles, it is surprising how limited the implementation of IMRT really is in the UK; the obstacles to implementation will come as no surprise!

In the fourth article, Appleyard et al describe their experiences of implementing systematic in vivo dosimetry in their centre. This research highlights where errors can occur, for example, the factors affecting diode reading. Their recommendations support the need for interfacing the diode system with software control.

In the next article, Kristi Hickey draws on her experience as a treatment radiographer at the Gamma Knife Centre, Cromwell Hospital, London, and reviews the literature on the evidence on the management of cerebral metastasis. Kirsti advocates a review of the management of these patients; in particular she suggests a need for an evaluation of the use of radiosurgery in these patients.

In the sixth article, Bridge et al present their research on a pilot study of the efficacy of acupuncture wristbands for reduction of radiotherapy – induced nausea. This study is interesting, as the findings indicate that there is a role for the use of wristbands for use with patients undergoing radiotherapy. The authors recommend that further studies would be beneficial to further explore their exact potential and role.

To complete this issue, Suzanne Stanley presents her study into treatment reproducibility; the purpose was to determine whether the current techniques at her centre were suitable for use with conformal treatment plans and to establish whether current verification procedures were adequate. This study has identified the need to implement changes to treatment verification procedures and revise techniques before the introduction of conformal radiotherapy.

As Editors, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our proactive Editorial Board members for their contribution to the growing success of the Journal and we would like to express our

grateful thanks to the following individuals who have given freely of their time and expertise to review submitted articles during this volume.

Rob Appleyard, Andy Beavis, Pam Berridge, Kathy Burgess, Linda Castleton, Mary Coffey, Hazel Colyer, John Coret, Joycelyn Cottrell, Pam Cherry, Kathy Cooke, Jane Day, Steve Edwards, Sara Faitfull, Dave Flinton, Elaine Gannon, Sue Griffiths, Marilyn

Hammick, Kay Jeffery, Jan Johnson, Angela Jones, Warren Kilby, Helen Lingham, Irene McIntyre, Cathy Meredith, Heidi Probst, Sally Powley, Clare Raymond – Barker, Jo Ann Reeves, John Svensson, Moira Tomlinson, Simon Walker, Lorraine Webster and Peter White.

*Angela Duxbury and David Eddy
Editors in Chief*