

questions about what is happening, look at options for support and have a point of contact if they wish to return at any future date.

Results Patients and their families have benefitted from support in all stages of their cancer journey. Education and advice has been available for generalist staff and support has been augmented by the Specialist Palliative Care Team. A wide range of resources for children and their relatives are available in the Unit.

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WHEN SHOULD WE TELL THE CHILDREN?

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Background In recent years, there has been growing recognition that the needs of dependent children should be considered when dealing with a parent with a life-threatening illness. Much patient distress can be associated with worries about the children and also, many children welcome the opportunity to talk with parents or professionals about the illness, treatments, survival and coping strategies. Many Hospices/Palliative Care Units in the UK provide support for dependent children, however, there is very little face-to-face support at diagnosis or subsequent care, in the acute setting.

Aim To provide an individualised service for families and children, depending on age, stage of development, family values, patterns and culture, from diagnosis to bereavement.

Method During the past five years, this tertiary Cancer Centre has provided a family service for patients with children. There is a weekly specialist service where patients can discuss the needs of their children or can access individual support for the children themselves. Parents are helped to discuss issues with their children and provided with resources such as leaflets, books, internet sites, discussion of memory boxes and DVDs. Some children may prefer to talk to a professional on their own or with a family member/friend. They are encouraged to ask