



**St Helena
Government**

• Today is World Cancer Day

• The recently introduced
Chemotherapy Service at the
General Hospital last year treated 16
patients on-Island

WORLD CANCER DAY 2020

Today, Tuesday 4 February 2020, is World Cancer Day - an international day used to raise awareness of Cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment.

To recognise the importance of this day, this article introduces the Chemotherapy Service provided by the Health Directorate here on St Helena:

The first chemotherapy treatment was delivered in November 2018. At that time the Health Directorate provided a service for a few patients who had already started their treatment in South Africa and were able to finish their treatment at home. Within three months it became clear that there were more Saint Helenians treated in South Africa who would benefit from this service and this prompted the development of the chemotherapy service during 2019.

A space was converted in the General Hospital as the Oncology Day Unit and the Oncology Nurse specialist arrived in May 2019 and was able to develop the Oncology Day Unit further.

The Pharmacist, Doctor and an Oncology Nurse make up the Oncology team and plan and deliver all treatments.

Last year, a total of 16 patients were treated with chemotherapy for a variety of Cancers, including Breast Cancer, different types of Bowel Cancer and Blood Cancers.

A patient undergoing chemotherapy said:

"The Oncology Nurse was so lovely. She came to see me before my operation and afterwards and gave me support when I needed it. One time, I phoned her late at night because I was confused about my Cancer tablets, and she sorted it out for me, there and then. I thought that they just gave chemotherapy, but they do so much more."

The Health Directorate works closely with a Cancer specialist in South Africa and, if recommended by the specialist, provides chemotherapy for patients on St Helena from start to finish.

The Health Directorate still completes chemotherapy treatments for patients who have started their treatment abroad. For many patients this has made a big difference, as they can now have all their treatment at home.

Another patient commented:

"I had made up my mind before seeing the doctor that I'm not going away for treatment. I had made up my mind that I was going to die. When I heard that I could have my operation and the treatment after at home, I decided to go for it. Being able to have my treatment at home has kept me alive."

Director of Health, Ted Rayment, concluded:

"The Health Directorate hopes to treat more Cancers early when the treatment is more likely to cure Cancer. Knowing your own body can help to prevent Cancer. New lumps or swellings in breasts and testicles, blood in your stool and unexpected weight loss can be one of the signs of Cancer and it is important that you see the doctor to make sure that there is nothing to worry about. Screening for Breast Cancer and Cervical Cancer also helps to detect Cancers early."

SHG

4 February 2020

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