

### A PATIENT EDUCATION GUIDE IN A RADIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT : AN EFFORT TOWARDS SELF-CARE.

A.Lupo Service de radiothérapie (Pr Closon) Hôpital universitaire de Bavière - B 4020 Liège - Belgium

An education booklet was written for cancer patients undergoing radiation therapy on the head and neck area. Availability of information is likely to reduce the stress associated with treatment and to promote a positive attitude towards illness : a physical and emotional comfort is a significant parameter of therapeutic response. The text was edited by a team of radiation oncology nurses and is based on information needs that patients daily express. It does not replace verbal communication between the patient and the nurse but comes in reinforcement and recall. The various events from pretreatment visit to follow-up are explained in focusing on the role of each member of the treatment team. Informations are given about therapy machines and radiation effects, prevention and treatment of side-effects. The booklet provides advises of general and peculiar health care as well as diet principles and meals prescriptions. The social problems and the financial aspects linked to the disease and the treatment are also covered. A special bookbinding allows individualization of the information according to each clinical situation : exclusive or post-operative radiotherapy, tumour site, ancillary drug treatment. The text can be easily read and understood, it does not use medical nor technical vocabulary. It was pretested on some patients and corrected before definitive printing. At the end of each irradiation course, individual written opinions are asked for. A questionnaire has evaluated the degree and the quality of cancer patients information at a time when the booklet did not exist. Results obtained among the newly educated population will permit to assess whether the main objectives were met.