Department of Health Purchases 20 New Radiotherapy Machines to Battle Cancer

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Cancer patients are set to benefit from the very latest cancer treatment technology thanks to a £30 million deal to purchase 20 new radiotherapy machines, the Department of Health announced today.

The machines are capable of delivering both standard radiotherapy and Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT), which is a particularly important form of treatment for head and neck cancers because it can be used to target the tumour more precisely, meaning there are fewer side-effects for patients. This can help improve the patient's quality of life after treatment and save lives.

This supports the Prime Minister's commitment to increase access to advanced radiotherapy treatments. These 20 new machines will mean that hospitals can upgrade their existing equipment and deliver the latest technology.

Health Minister Lord Howe said:

"We want the NHS to have the best cancer services in the world and by investing £30 million in these additional machines, patients will have better access to this highly effective form of treatment.

"We are committed to improving cancer survival rates, saving an additional 5,000 lives each year and making sure that cancer survivors have the best quality of life. We have already invested £173 million to expand our radiotherapy capacity.

"This deal means patients will get first class cancer care but it is also a great bit of business. It is a fantastic example of how the NHS can use its size and bulk buying power to save money - millions will be saved for the NHS, which can be ploughed back into patient care."

The £30 million deal for 20 new radiotherapy machines will also save the NHS £3 million compared to the price hospitals would have had to pay if they bought each machine individually. It is the biggest deal the Department of Health has ever struck for NHS equipment, and hospitals will be able to spend the money saved on front line patient care.

This is in line with the government's new NHS procurement strategy - published earlier this month - which sets out a plan to harness the sheer size and purchasing power of the NHS to strike better deals. The £3 million that has been saved for the NHS is enough to pay for 500 hip or knee replacements or 4,000 cataract operations.

Professor Peter Johnson, Cancer Research UK's chief clinician, said:

"We're extremely pleased that the government is providing much needed money for state-of-the-art radiotherapy machines. This will help ensure cancer patients have access to advanced treatment. Radiotherapy is a highly effective way of treating cancer, but we know the facilities we have in some hospitals need to be upgraded to make sure patients can get the treatment they need.

"It's important that we build on the success of the recent Radiotherapy Innovation Fund with continued support and investment over the coming years. This announcement takes us a step closer to a world-class radiotherapy service."

Andy Brown, Managing Director for Business Solutions for NHS Supply Chain said:

"This is a significant deal for the NHS and means the NHS will be able to provide even better cancer treatment. NHS Supply Chain is committed to bringing more value to the NHS through good procurement and asset management in this way, across all types of capital medical equipment."

Background information

- Since April 2013, cancer treatments have be planned and paid for nationally by NHS England.

- The Department of Health has invested £173 million to expand our radiotherapy capacity and we have given Trusts the responsibility of purchasing, providing and maintaining their radiotherapy machines.

- NHS organisations will need to put requests to NHS Supply Chain to purchase the machines, at the discounted rate.

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