

What you need to know about the COPLG

How does the COPLG contribute to the management of cancer in the UK?

The Clinical Oncology Patients' Liaison Group (COPLG) is one of two patient liaison groups, one for clinical oncology and the other for clinical radiology, which operate as part of The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR). Clinical oncologists and clinical radiologists work by:

- Informing the detection, diagnosis and management of cancer through the use of imaging technologies; and
- Treating cancer with radiotherapy, chemotherapy and other systemic therapy.

The RCR is one of the Medical Royal Colleges and is a registered charity with a key role in setting the standards for doctors and their respective specialties who deal with cancer patients. The RCR is committed to making the involvement of patients, carers and the public a priority and it is the COPLG that encourages and promotes such an approach within all RCR activities by:

- Expressing the views of cancer patients, families, carers and the wider public to the RCR, and onwards if necessary to the government, on matters of oncology and other healthcare issues
- Providing a patient perspective to the work of the medical professionals in the RCR
- Appointing lay members of the COPLG to sit on different bodies who produce reports and guidance to work on areas such as radiotherapy, safety, paediatric radiotherapy, chemotherapy, cancer treatment and fertility
- Individual members attending conferences and seminars to provide a lay view on the topics and issues being discussed.

The COPLG

The COPLG aims to ensure cancer patients have a real say in how their healthcare services are planned, developed and delivered.

The Group directs itself mainly towards:

- Influencing the way in which healthcare organisations and professionals provide cancer treatment
- Ensuring that the environment in which treatment is delivered is safe and suitable
- Improving two-way communication between healthcare professionals and patients, their families and their carers.

The COPLG is strongly committed to encouraging health authorities and professionals, primary care trusts, and NHS employers, to discharge all aspects of their general duty to involve and consult the public in their healthcare organisation and delivery.

What is the focus of the work of the COPLG as a group?

- To provide patient and public perspectives on RCR Faculty activities to assist in improving service delivery at a national and local level.
- To provide communication opportunities for patient and public input into ongoing RCR Faculty work programmes.
- To promote the participation of patients, families and carers in oncology treatment decision making.
- To prepare and keep under review the series of paper and electronic COPLG publications.
- To contribute to the education and training programmes for oncologists.

COPLG has had a significant input into a number of functions within the RCR, including projects aimed at patients (patient information leaflets, improving department services, a patient information website; www.goingfora.com). It also provides comments on a wide range of healthcare issues beyond cancer treatment.

Who are the members of the COPLG?

The Group, with a lay member Chair and a medical Vice-Chair, comprises:

- Eight voluntary lay members who are currently, or who have been, cancer patients or have been carers of cancer patients. They are appointed for a three-year term and drawn from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Up to four clinical oncologists
- The Dean of the Faculty of Clinical Oncology
- A radiographer.

Lay members of the Group are available to attend meetings to talk about the work of the Group.

More information about COPLG and how to contact the Group can be found at www.rcr.ac.uk/coplg