

Brain Metastases Guideline – Patient Advice to Radiation Oncologist

The brain is arguably the most important organ in the human body. It controls and coordinates movements, like hugging a loved one. It allows us to think and feel, and enables us to have memories, those treasured moments with our family and friends. The brain contains everything that make us not only human but uniquely ourselves. Always remember that your patient is trusting you to care for them.

You are the expert of the science. We are an expert of our bodies. If we work together, we can make a phenomenal team.

Although guidelines exist to help you formulate a treatment plan, they are unable to account for the many variables that come with each individual patient. It is important to consider these variables such as chronological age, biological age, performance status, comorbidities, risk tolerance and social support, when formulating a radiation plan.

Each patient is an individual with hopes and needs as heterogenous as their cancer. While some patients want to know as little information about their care as possible, there are others who prefer as much detail as possible. Take the time to discover who your patient is and communicate accordingly.

Brain radiation usually requires the use of a mask or frame. Patients may have difficulty with these restrictive devices, especially with their first experience. Communicating about possible anxiety this may cause the patient prior to the day of treatment is important, so solutions can be discussed in advance and put in place before beginning treatment.

This is your profession and providing radiation treatment is something you have done on a regular basis over the years and even decades. Despite this familiar experience, it is important to remember that when meeting with a new patient that this is their first time, so your patience and willingness to educate them about the experience will make a key difference in their ability to cope well with their disease.

Patients can experience a variety of emotions but most commonly, they are scared. Establish the expectation that you want them to feel comfortable contacting you or designated nurse/support personnel when they have questions or concerns at any point in their treatment.

Additional information is available:

- [ASTRO Radiation Therapy for Brain Metastases Guideline](#)
- RT Answers (ASTRO's patient website): <https://www.rtanswers.org/>;
<https://www.rtanswers.org/Cancer-Types/Brain-Metastases>
- Additional information on brain metastasis from breast cancer: <https://mbcbrainmets.org/>