

Generic justification

HIQA generically justifies short courses of radiotherapy for breast cancer.

Why did we perform this review?

Since January 2019, new practices involving patients' exposure to ionising radiation must be justified by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).

Ultra-hypofractionation is a way of delivering radiotherapy over fewer sessions and a shorter time period, such as where a full course of radiotherapy is given in five sessions over one week.



In patients with breast cancer, clinical trials have shown that short courses of radiotherapy are equally as effective and as safe as longer courses of treatment. Shorter courses of radiotherapy were first used in Ireland in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Advantages

An important advantage of ultra-hypofractionated radiotherapy is that patients only have to attend the hospital for five sessions over one week, rather than 15 sessions over three weeks. There are side effects associated with both long and short courses of treatment, but the available evidence indicates that there are no important differences between them.

