

8-5-2020

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Recommended Citation

Al-Shamsi, Humaid O. and Abu-Ghelda, Ibrahim, "Challenges for Cancer Patients Returning Home During COVID-19 Pandemic after Medical Tourism - A Consensus Report" (2020). *Covid19 Newsletters*. 4.
https://scholarworks.uaeu.ac.ae/covid19_newsletters/4

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COVID-19 RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Issue 19, 5 August 2020

Challenges for Cancer Patients Returning Home During COVID-19 Pandemic after Medical Tourism - A Consensus Report by the Emirates Oncology Task Force

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a global health crisis. Numerous cancer patients from non-Western countries, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), seek cancer care outside their home countries and many are sponsored by their governments for treatment. Many patients interrupted their cancer treatment abruptly and returned to their home countries with unique challenges.

Experts from medical, surgical and other cancer subspecialties in the UAE were invited to form a taskforce to address challenges and propose recommendations for patients returning home from abroad after medical tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The taskforce looked at practical challenges and provided recommendations for cancer patients returning to their countries from treatment abroad. Lack of medical documentation, pathology specimens and radiology images are one of the major limitations on the continuation of the cancer care for returning patients. Difference in approaches and treatment recommendations between the existing treating oncologists abroad and receiving oncologists in the UAE regarding the optimal management was another issue. However, this can be addressed by early and empathic communications with patients and by engaging the previous treating oncologists in treatment planning based on the available resources and expertise in the UAE. Interruption of curative radiotherapy (RT) schedules, which can potentially increase the risk of treatment failure, has been a major challenge. The taskforce recommended that RT dose-compensation calculation should be considered in these circumstances.

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