Beyond Bricks and Mortar: Experiences of a Regional Radiation Oncology Service Provider in QLD

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What should a regional cancer centre offer?

• Integrated cancer care
  – Between disciplines (radiation, medical oncology etc)
  – Public and private
  – Community

• Multidisciplinary care
• Quality of service delivery
• Staff development and education
• Research
• Access to specialised services
For the community

- Local treatment for patients
- Less social and financial impact
- Employment opportunities
- Reduced carbon footprint
  - After 5 months of operation, saved 897,000 km of travel to Brisbane.
What are the challenges?

• Legal agreements
• Communication processes and moving information amongst the key players
• Developing workable partnerships
• Capturing the market and preventing leakage
• Brand name-environment and morale
• Staffing- recruitment and retention
• Regional Infra structure
Strengths of private sector

• Less bureaucracy
• Ability to balance output & input
• Ability of offer competitive packages for staff
• Flexibility in forward planning
• Efficiency
• New technology
Perceived Weakness of the Private Sector

- Maintaining the bottom line
- Integration with other providers
- Servicing all patients regardless of insurance status
- Participating in research
- Participating in training of new staff
Different models for different regions

• Toowoomba: Private operator in a private hospital with SLA for inpatients at the Public Hospital

• Cairns: Private operator in a public hospital with SLA for all patients.
Legal Agreements

- Commonwealth
- State
- Private providers
- Organisational
Communication

• Within the organisation:
  – Paperless record
  – Networked sites

• Outside the organisation:
  – Public Hospital
  – Other providers

• For the patient
  – “Stay in touch program” for breast cancer patients away from home
Environment & Morale

- Positive work environment
- Strengths based work force
- Social supports
- Providing challenges to promote work engagement
Partnerships

- Private hospitals
- Public hospitals
- Community
  - Cancer councils
  - NGO
  - Philanthropic groups
Marketing

- Marketing
  - Site visits
  - Media
- Analyse referral base for gaps
- Minimise leakage
- Developing a brand name
The Cadbury Factor

• Many regional services have one and a half machine load
• Impact on financial viability
Staff development and retention

- Professional development
- Work life balance workshops
- Research
- Publications
Regional Infrastructure

- Radiology
- Speciality medical services
- Allied health
Assumptions about the private sector

• Tend to treat with more fractions
• Staff carry much larger cases loads
• Treat breast and prostate and leave the complex cases to the public sector
• Not interested in participating in research
• Not interested in training new staff
Comparison of a Commonwealth-initiated regional radiation oncology facility in Toowoomba with a Queensland Health facility

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CASE MIX
ROQ
Mater

CASE MIX FOR ROQ
- BREAST
- PROSTATE
- LUNG
- RECTUM
- HEAD AND NECK
- LYMPHOMA
- SKIN
- BRAIN

MATER
- BREAST
- PROSTATE
- LUNG
- RECTUM
- HEAD AND NECK
- LYMPHOMA
- SKIN
- BRAIN
FIELDS AND FRACTIONS
ROQ        MATER

FIELDS AND FRACTIONS PER COURSE

AV FIELDS PER ATTENDANCE
AV FRACTIONS PER COURSE

ROQ        MATER
COST PER COURSE
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ROQ VS MATER

COST PER TREATMENT COURSE

13% less cost per course
BREAKDOWN OF COST PER COURSE

TREATMENT COSTS

- ROQ
- MATER

- PATIENT
- COMMONWEALTH
- STATE

$2,000.00
$4,000.00
$6,000.00
$8,000.00
$10,000.00
$12,000.00
Research

• Research enriches the work environment
• Patients like to access new therapies
• During the period under review, for every 43 treatment courses, there was one patient entered into a clinical trial at ROQ and for the QHF the number was 68.
Conclusions

• Private providers can provide a regional radiotherapy service which is viable
• Multidisciplinary care is deliverable for common cancers
• Infrastructure limitations are a challenge
• Legal agreements are complex and expensive
• Good communication within and outside the organisation is essential
• Minimise leakage of referrals
• Need to create a brand name to attract and retain staff
• Embrace research and staff training
• Learn from other industries (networking, centralisation of payroll, central audit, shared education)