**Topic category:** RTT

**Presentation preference:** oral

**Keywords:** VERT; Education; Patient information; Communication;

**Title:**  The utilisation of a Virtual Environment for Radiotherapy Training (VERT) in patient information giving sessions prior to the delivery of external beam radiotherapy**.**

**Abstract:**

(1) The aim of the study was to explore the prostate patients’ perceptions of VERT as an information giving resource prior to radiotherapy delivery.

The objectives were:

• To determine the level of knowledge of those patients who attended VERT for a pre-treatment talk

• To explore patients perceptions who utilised VERT as an information giving resource prior to radiotherapy treatment

• To identify the benefits and limitations of using VERT as pre-treatment information giving resource

(2) Material/methods

A survey design was utilised to address the aims and objective of the study. The study was conducted over 2 phases: Phase 1 - participants were invited to attend a VERT patient information session four weeks prior to their planning CT scan. Phase 2 – patients were asked to complete a questionnaire two weeks after start of radiotherapy treatment. The questionnaire was designed to collect data on the prostate cancer patient’s knowledge attitudes and beliefs regarding pre-treatment information provided prior to their radiotherapy treatment.

A total population sample was considered for this study. All patients being referred for radical radiotherapy to the prostate were be invited to participate, over a five month data collection period (March – August 2015). A total of n=40 patients were included in the sample.

 (3) Results

Statistical package SPSS (Version 21) was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics and frequency tables were the first steps in the data analysis. Thereafter, Chi-squared tests were used to analyse the data further. Open ended questions were analysed thematically.

Results are currently being analysed however preliminary results are very positive, a summary of the preliminary results are outlined below (the final presentation will include frequency tables):

* Most patients found the VERT session to be very helpful
* Most patients stated that the session helped them to understand the importance of following bowel and bladder instructions prior to treatment and enhanced their knowledge about radiotherapy side effects
* The sessions were highly recommended for other patients and future recommendations included family members and carers to be included.
* Most patients were comfortable being part of a group during the presentation.
* Patients believed the sessions reduced their anxiety and stress about their upcoming treatment.

(4) Conclusion.

Patient perceptions on the use of VERT as information giving tool prior to radiotherapy treatment were very positive. The sessions enable patients to understand the potential impact of treatment volumes if the internal organ shape and location differed from that originally planned, enabling them to comply with radiotherapy treatment instructions.