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Ensuring Radiation Safety in Clinical Trials

Radiation experts in the UK have drawn up a new system to streamline approval process for setting up clinical trials involving radiotherapy and other forms of ionising radiation, such as PET scans. The new system provides a standardised way of assuring that exposure to ionising radiation during clinical trials remains within safe limits, while also reducing duplication of work.

All new trials involving exposure to ionising radiation across the Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre (ECMC) network — a joint initiative between Cancer Research UK and the UK's four health departments — will now use the new system. This measure is part of a collaboration with the Health Research Authority (HRA) to begin rolling out HRA Approval, the new single approval system for health research in the NHS in England.

"It's wonderful to see the medical physics and clinical radiology communities working together to improve the way in which radiation exposure reviews are carried out within clinical trials," said Giles Morrison, head of radiology physics at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, who was involved in the consultation process. "This will mean patients getting new treatments sooner. We're still working on the detail and I hope all ionising radiation experts will give their views to ensure that the process is the best it can be."

An immunotherapy trial in patients with triple negative breast cancer is one of the first ECMC trials to undergo the new system. Greg Trevelyan, head of the UK Study Start Up Group at Roche, who are sponsoring this trial, said: "Roche embraces initiatives that have a commitment to deliver early treatment access, whilst maintaining patient safety. As the leading pharmaceutical investor in R&D, Roche is dedicated to working with our industry colleagues in streamlining how clinical trials are set up and conducted in the UK."

The ECMC network is also working with the HRA to pioneer a new system that allows a single designated pharmacist to review the pharmacy requirements of a clinical trial, rather than conducting multiple independent reviews at each participating hospital.

Both schemes will form part of the new HRA Approval process, which will be implemented in stages, by study type, during the course of 2015, streamlining the approvals process for research taking place within the NHS.

"We're delighted that our Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres network has been able to support this important initiative to streamline the regulation of clinical research, so patients can continue to reap the benefits from the world-class research taking place throughout the UK," according to Professor Peter Johnson, Cancer Research UK's chief clinician.

Source: Cancer Research UK

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