

Breast Cancer Bundle of Care: a pilot study

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Background

Consideration of the costs associated with cancer care and treatment, and their true impact on patients is lacking in Australia.¹ The complexities of public and private healthcare services, combined with a patient's unfamiliarity with the health system can make it difficult for patients to navigate, leading to the issue of unexpected out-of-pocket costs.¹

For women with breast cancer, the financial burden can be large, creating additional stress in an already stressful time. As outlined by the BCNA, costs can vary significantly based on whether a public or private pathway is taken:

*"A woman without private health insurance pays around \$3,600 in out-of-pocket costs. This figure rises to \$7,000 or more for a woman who holds private health insurance."*²

GenesisCare and the University of Western Australia (UWA) partnered in 2018 to investigate ways to overcome some of the difficulty patients experience when being treated for breast cancer. The partnership sought to develop an Early-stage Breast Cancer Bundle which provided all the services that an early-stage breast cancer patient would typically utilise during the first year of treatment for a known, capped cost the patient. The Bundle was established in July 2022 in partnership with St John of God Hospital – Subiaco and provides surgery, medical oncology, radiation oncology, radiology, pathology, physiotherapy, dietetics and clinical psychology as well as a patient navigation service for a known, capped Bundle cost of \$2500 (HBF members) or \$2800 (Medibank members).

The Pilot commenced in Perth and will track 150 participants before reviewing results.

Aims

- Improve patient experience: Navigation support and easy access to services
- Create financial transparency and certainty: Capped, known cost for the full treatment pathway
- Improve patient outcomes: Lower patients' distress throughout treatment enabled by support and timely access to services
- Create a sustainable, scalable model: Create a replicable, scalable and fully costed program that can expand to other geographies and disease groups

Methods

To develop the Bundle, GenesisCare and UWA worked with a number of stakeholders to determine the scope, inclusion criteria Bundle model and costs as well as pricing. Below outlines the key steps that were undertaken to develop the Bundle to Go-Live:

- **Defined the scope of the Bundle:** Consultation with breast cancer treatment providers, allied health professionals and insurers to determine the appropriateness of the pathway and MDT for the Bundle in Perth
- **Reviewed literature and consulted widely** including surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, allied health professionals, insurers and patients to confirm the pathway, services and to test the concept
- **Defined the costs within the pathway** working with key stakeholders as well as desktop research on MBS/ PBS/ private health insurance coverage
- **Determined Bundle price based on costs and market value**
- **Tested with key stakeholders (including patients)** to confirm the model was right and costs were accurate and appropriate for the market
 - Bundle inclusions and exclusions
 - Bundle price
- **Finalised design** based on feedback from key stakeholders
- **Confirmed providers and insurers participating in the Bundle** based on MDT and established referral pathways. MOU established with each provider to confirm ways of working
- **Recruited patient navigator** and determined scope of role
- **Designed and set up of the independent Evaluation of the Bundle**, partnering with UTS's Centre of Health Economics research and Evaluation to undertake the project
- **Prepared for Go-Live**, setting up people, systems, processes to enable the Bundle between all providers

The Bundle went live and commenced recruitment of patients in July 2022.

Interim findings

11 patients recruited to the Bundle



■ Consented ■ Declined

9 patients participating in the Evaluation



■ Consented ■ Declined

Patient and provider feedback has indicated that the patient navigation support and the capped out of pocket expenses have been highly valued to date.

Patient A: "I'm so grateful to be part of the Bundle and for your assistance with everything. It definitely takes away much of the financial worry at an already stressful time."

Conclusions

Initial findings are showing positive value for patients and providers. Qualitative and quantitative data collection will continue throughout the Bundle pilot with analysis and reporting taking place at 75 patients and 150 patients recruited, respectively. Final results will be shared widely.

References

¹ Bygrave A, Whittaker K, Paul C, Fradgley EA, Varlow M, Aranda S. Australian Experiences of Out-of-Pocket Costs and Financial Burden Following a Cancer Diagnosis: A Systematic Review. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2021 Mar 2;18(5):2422. doi: 10.3390/ijerph18052422. PMID: 33801282; PMCID: PMC7967550.

² Breast Cancer Network of Australia. The financial impact of breast cancer. 2016 BCNA, URL: <https://www.bcna.org.au/media/5609/the-financial-impact-of-breast-cancer.pdf>