

## For the Patient: GUPDOC

BCCA Protocol Summary for Palliative Therapy for Metastatic Hormone Refractory Prostate Cancer Using DOCEtaxel and Prednisone

### **Uses:**

- Docetaxel is an intravenous drug treatment given as therapy for metastatic prostate cancer. This treatment may improve your overall survival and help reduce your symptoms.

### **Treatment Plan:**

- Your treatment plan would usually consist of between 6 to 10 cycles (5-8 months), depending on whether you are tolerating it well and your cancer is responding to it. A cycle length is 3 weeks. Docetaxel will be given intravenously at every visit. For each cycle, you will need to have a blood test and see your oncologist before the treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on your blood counts and/or other side effects.
- Each treatment will take about an hour. You will be asked to take dexamethasone 8 mg (usually 2 x 4 mg pills), twice daily for three days, starting one day prior to each dose of Docetaxel. This medication helps to prevent allergy to Docetaxel and also helps to prevent some of the side effects that might occur after using Docetaxel, such as edema, or limb swelling.
- You will also need to take prednisone 10 mg daily (usually 2 x 5 mg pills at once or one 5 mg pill twice daily). You will need to take the tablets with food to avoid stomach upset.

### **Instructions:**

- If you need an anti-nausea drug, bring your pills with you to take before each treatment. You may also need to take your anti-nausea pills at home after therapy. Nausea, however, is not a frequent problem with this regimen.

- Drink reasonable amounts of fluids for the first day or two after chemotherapy (6-8 cups a day).
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs. Other drugs such as Phenytoin (DILANTIN®), Warfarin (COUMADIN®), and Digoxin (LANOXIN®) may interact with GUPDOC.
- You may drink small amounts of alcohol, as it will not affect the safety or usefulness of your treatment.
- Tell other doctors or dentists that you are being treated with GUPDOC before you receive any treatment from them.

### **Serious Risks of Treatment:**

**Unexpected and unlikely side effects can occur with any drug treatment. The ones listed below are particularly relevant to your treatment plan:**

### **During treatment:**

- **Infection:** The number of white blood cells that help fight infections will be lowered by the chemotherapy drugs, usually starting after about day 7 of each cycle. Your blood count is expected to return to normal by day 1 of the next cycle, and will be normal after the 5 months of chemotherapy drugs. If your white blood cell count becomes very low you could get a serious infection. **If you have a fever over 38°C or 100°F, call your cancer doctor immediately (24 hours a day) or go immediately to your nearest Hospital Emergency and tell the doctor you are on chemotherapy.**
- **Increased risk of bleeding:** The number of platelets (special blood cells that help your blood to clot normally after injury) may be lowered by the treatment. They are expected to return to normal by day 1 of next cycle. When the platelet count is low you may be more likely to bruise or bleed. Notify your cancer doctor promptly if you develop large or numerous bruises, or unusual bleeding (eg. nosebleed that won't stop, blood in stool, urine, or sputum). Try to avoid using aspirin or ibuprofen, if other pain medications could be used. Talk to your doctor if you feel you need to use one of these medications while on chemotherapy. For patients receiving Warfarin, a modification of the dose may be required based on blood test results (increased INR due to possible interaction with chemotherapy).

- **Tissue or vein injury:** Docetaxel can cause tissue injury if it leaks out of the vein while being given. Report any sensation of burning or pain to your nurse immediately. Chemotherapy may cause some inflammation and/or scarring in the veins, which may make it difficult to start an IV. Your nurse will help your doctor assess whether a special intravenous device (PICC line or portacath) needs to be considered for your therapy. Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed in your vein. If so, apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.

**During or after treatment:**

- **Neuropathy:** Docetaxel can cause you to develop damage to the peripheral nerve endings (the nerves to the hands and feet, and rarely, the face). This can result in feelings of numbness and tingling, or sometimes painful burning sensations. You will need to be careful when handling things that are sharp, hot, or very cold. The majority of the time, these feelings develop after a number of treatments, are not severe, and will resolve fully over a period of months once treatment stops. Infrequently (<5%), these feelings might occur early, might be severe, or might not entirely resolve.

**Common chemotherapy side effects and management:**

SIDE EFFECT	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b> can occasionally occur with Docetaxel and you may need to take anti-nausea drugs at the time of the injections and on days 2 and 3 while at home.</p>	<p>You will be given a prescription for anti-nausea drugs to take before your IV treatment and afterwards at home, if needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, so follow directions closely.</li><li>• Refer to pamphlets on how to deal with nausea and vomiting given to you by your nurse at your centre.</li></ul>
<p><b>Allergic reactions</b> may occur during or after the administration of Docetaxel. Signs of an allergic reaction are flushing, rash, itching, dizziness, swelling or breathing problems, or sudden chest or back pain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dexamethasone is used to help prevent allergic reactions. Doses of anti-allergic medications may be given if you have an allergic reaction despite this.</li><li>• Your nurse will check your heart rate (pulse) and blood pressure if needed.</li><li>• Tell your nurse or doctor <b><i>immediately</i></b> if you have any sign of an allergic reaction</li></ul>
<p><b>Hair loss.</b> Your hair will fall out 2-4 weeks after treatment begins. Your scalp may feel tender. You may lose hair on your face and body. In most cases, your hair will grow back once your chemotherapy treatments are over and sometimes between treatments. Rarely, hair may not grow back for more than two years. The colour and texture of the new hair growth may be different.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms.</li><li>• Apply mineral oil to your scalp to reduce itching.</li><li>• If you lose your eyelashes and eyebrows, protect your eyes from dust and grit with a broad-rimmed hat and glasses.</li><li>• Ask your nurse about information on wigs and head coverings.</li></ul>

SIDE EFFECT	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Fatigue</b> is common especially in the first week after your treatment. As the number of chemotherapy cycles increases, fatigue may get worse or last longer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your energy level will improve with time after treatment is completed.</li> <li>• You may obtain a suggestion pamphlet for handling fatigue from nursing staff in your facility</li> <li>• Your fatigue may improve more quickly, or be less significant, if you are able to keep up some regular physical activity throughout your treatment plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mouth sores</b> may occur a few days after chemotherapy treatment and may last days or weeks. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, gums, and the sides of the mouth or in the throat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste.</li> <li>• Try baking soda mouth rinses (using 1/4 tsp baking soda in 1 cup warm water) and rinse several times a day. Try ideas in <i>Easy to chew, easy to swallow food ideas*</i>.</li> <li>• Tell your doctor about a sore mouth, as your chemotherapy doses may need to be decreased if mouth sores are severe. Call your doctor if you are having difficulty eating or drinking due to pain.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nail changes</b> such as change in colour may occur. Rarely, nails will loosen or fall off, or the nailbeds will be painful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may be given frozen gloves to wear on your hands during your treatment to help prevent nail changes.</li> <li>• Take acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) every 3-4 hours if nails are painful.</li> </ul>

SIDE EFFECT	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Diarrhea</b> may occur between treatments.</p>	<p>To help diarrhea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of liquids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> </ul> <p>Avoid high fiber foods as outlined in <i>Food ideas to help with diarrhea during chemotherapy</i>.</p>
<p><b>Pain affecting joints or muscles</b> may occur for a few days after docetaxel. After you stop chemotherapy altogether, you may also feel increased joint aching or stiffness for a few months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) or acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) for mild to moderate pain. Contact your cancer doctor if your pain is severe.</li> <li>• Your family doctor can help you to manage symptoms of joint pain after chemotherapy.</li> </ul>

\*available through your nurse or nutritionist

**Side effects of the dexamethasone premedication and management:**

<b>SIDE EFFECTS</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>
<p><b>Heartburn</b> may occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take your dexamethasone after eating.</li><li>• Take an antacid one hour before or two hours after dexamethasone if you have heartburn. Antacids can reduce the amount of dexamethasone absorbed when taken at the same time.</li><li>• When possible avoid ASA (eg, ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (eg, ADVIL®), as this can increase heartburn or stomach irritation also.</li><li>• Notify your oncologist if you have had ulcers, hiatus hernia, or reflux problems.</li></ul>
<p><b>Blood sugar</b> may be elevated, especially in diabetics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check your blood sugar regularly if you are diabetic. Seek medical advice if your readings are poorly controlled.</li><li>• If you have an unexpected degree of thirst and have to urinate very frequently, you should contact your treatment clinic to get your blood sugar tested.</li></ul>
<p>You may have <b>difficulty in falling asleep</b> on the days you take dexamethasone. You may feel restless or anxious, or find that your moods are more variable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mild exercise before bed (such as a walk around the block) may help. Avoid caffeine and other stimulants. If the problem seems very difficult, discuss this with your oncologist.</li></ul>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Swelling</b> of hands, feet or lower legs occur if your body retains extra fluid. This is usually temporary. This may arise after you have stopped docetaxel, and resolve gradually over weeks or a couple of months.</p> <p>If only one limb swells, you should inform your cancer treatment team right away, in case this is a signal of a blood clot in that limb.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevate your feet when sitting.</li> <li>• Avoid tight clothing.</li> <li>• Avoid food with high salt or sodium.</li> </ul>

**If you experience symptoms or changes in your body that have not been described above but worry you, or if any symptoms are severe, contact**

\_\_\_\_\_ at telephone number \_\_\_\_\_