Advanced breast cancer (ABC) factsheet

Current treatment options

- ABC therapy is primarily focused on managing symptoms, delaying the spread of cancer and prolonging life without negatively impacting on the patients quality of life.4
- Treatment regimens can be systemic, dealing with the body as a whole and include chemotherapy, biological therapy, hormonal therapy and other targeted therapies which identify and attack specific cancer cells.12
- Treatment can be local, addressing the particular area / organ affected by the disease (such as surgery and radiotherapy), or a combination of both local and systemic approaches.12

Further ABC resources

Treatment guidelines:
1. 1st International Consensus Guidelines for Advanced Breast Cancer (ABC1)
   www.abc-lisbon.org/pagine-interne/downloads.html
2. NCCN breast cancer guidelines for patients
   www.nccn.org/patients/guidelines/breast/index.html#1/2
3. ESMO Clinical practice guidelines for diagnosis treatment and follow up
   http://annonc.oxfordjournals.org/content/23/suppl_7/vi11.full

ABC research:
1. Here & Now campaign research
   www.wearehereandnow.com
2. BRIDGE survey
   www.onscologypractice.com/co/journal/articles/0709406.pdf

Glossary of breast cancer terms:
www.breastcancercare.org.uk/breast-cancer-information/glossary

Patient support groups:
[Insert PAG website link]

For more information, please contact:
[Insert PAG contact details]

References
What is advanced breast cancer?

Advanced breast cancer is an umbrella term for both locally advanced breast cancer (stage 3) and metastatic breast cancer (stage 4). \(^1\)

Locally advanced breast cancer occurs when the cancer has spread to lymph nodes and/or other tissue in the area of the breast, but not to more distant sites in the body. \(^2\) Within locally advanced breast cancer there are three stages: \(^2\)

Metastatic breast cancer is the most advanced form of the disease – this is when the cancer has spread further to other parts of the body, such as the bones or liver. \(^3\) At this stage the disease cannot be cured, although treatments are available to control growth of the cancer and to relieve symptoms. \(^4\)

Advanced breast cancer: The cancer has started to spread to other parts of the body

The diagram above shows how the tumour in the breast tissue can begin to spread to local tissue and lymph nodes, and then to further parts of the body through lymph or blood vessels. \(^5\)

Different types of advanced breast cancer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hormone receptor status</th>
<th>Some cancers develop from cells that contain hormone receptors and are known as hormone-receptor-positive (HR+). This means the growth of these cells is stimulated by hormones; this could be the oestrogen hormone (ER+), the progesterone hormone (PR+), or both. Cancers which are not stimulated by either hormones are classed as HR-. (^6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human epidermal growth factor receptor status</td>
<td>Under normal circumstances, breast cells have proteins called HER2 (human epidermal growth factor receptor 2) on their surface, which help the cells to grow, divide and repair themselves. Some cancer cells have an increased number of these proteins, which causes the cells to grow and divide uncontrollably. This type of cancer is called HER2+. Cancer cells that don’t have an increased number of HER2 proteins are called HER2-(^7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triple-negative</td>
<td>Triple-negative cancer means the growth of the cancer is not stimulated by either oestrogen or progesterone hormones, nor by HER2 proteins. (^8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symptoms of advanced breast cancer

Although individuals with ABC sometimes have no symptoms, the most common are:\(^9\):

- **Headaches:** usually connected to brain metastases
- **Weight loss/loss of appetite:** usually connected to liver metastases
- **Shortness of breath:** usually connected to lung metastases
- **Bone pain:** usually connected to bone metastases