

Thyroid cancer: a review of treatment and follow-up

Louiza VINI, Clive HARMER and V.R. MCCREADY

Thyroid Unit, Royal Marsden Hospital

The importance of thyroid cancers far exceeds their frequency, since they are uncommon tumours accounting for only 1% of all malignancies and for even smaller proportion of cancer deaths (0.2%). A variety of distinct tumour types arise in the thyroid gland, with variable natural histories resulting from different rates of growth and biological aggressiveness. The long natural history of the majority of thyroid neoplasms imposes a commitment for long-term follow-up and stresses the importance of planning treatment so as to avoid delayed complications that impair the quality of life of patients.

The management of thyroid cancer is multidisciplinary, requiring consultation and active intervention by surgeons, endocrinologists and radiotherapists. Surgery is of paramount importance in the successful eradication of the tumours while radioiodine offers a unique therapeutic approach. Treatment must be strongly influenced by consideration of prognostic variables.

Key words: thyroid, cancer, therapy, ¹³¹I