West Midlands Family Cancer Strategy: Completing the Family History Form

In most families, cancers will have occurred by chance, and the risk to other people in the family is no different to that of the general population. However, a small proportion of cancers (less than 10%) are due to an inherited predisposition. Before we try and answer your questions about the risks of cancers in your family and whether extra screening is beneficial for you, it is important to try and collect as much information as possible about your family history.

Please give as much information as possible about your blood relatives, including those who have not had cancer. If you do not know all the information, perhaps someone else in the family would be able to help you. If this is not possible please do not worry, just provide the information that you can.

Names: If a relative has changed their name (e.g. due to marriage or divorce) please give any previous names.

Address: If you do not know a relative’s address, please give the town or city they lived in when they had cancer.

Dates of birth/death: If you do not know the full date, the year or a rough date is still helpful (e.g. 1920-1930).

Type of cancer: We need to know where in the body individuals had cancer(s) (e.g. breast, bowel, lung) or if they have had bowel polyps. If a relative had cancer but you don’t know where, select “Unknown cancer”.

Age at diagnosis: Please put the age at which your relative was diagnosed for each cancer they had.

What do you do with this information?
We may need to get some more specific details about the cancers in your family from medical records. We can access this automatically for relatives who are deceased but we need permission from living relatives. We can send your relative a consent form to ask for this permission if you indicate you are happy for us to do so and have provided an address. We will not contact your relatives without your permission. If you would prefer, we can send you a consent form to pass onto them. We do not usually need to remove any records as we can obtain copies of the appropriate reports.

If you are unable to pass a consent form on to a relative (e.g. if you are not in contact) we will try to advise you as best we can without this information but our advice may be less accurate.

What happens next?
Once we receive your form, your genetic counsellor and consultant will look at the information you have given to assess whether your risk of cancer is increased and whether any further screening or genetic investigations would be helpful for you and your family.

We will either write to you with this information or arrange an appointment for you to discuss this further with one of our genetics doctors or genetic counsellors. We endeavour to offer you further advice within 18 weeks of receiving this form. It would help us greatly if any consent forms we send to you or your relatives are returned as promptly as possible.

Is this information confidential?
It is possible that the information you provide on this form could be helpful in giving similar advice to other members of your family. If there is any specific information that should be kept in confidence, please let us know and we will do our best to ensure we do not disclose it to anyone else in your family. When we send out consent forms for relatives, they often ask who has requested the information. We would usually explain that we are collecting the information on your behalf but if you would prefer that we did not do so, please let us know. You may prefer to let your relatives know that they may receive a consent form from us.

If you have any questions completing this form or the information you provide please contact us:
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