



North Downs

specialist referrals



Oncology care
at NDSR

Committed to excellence



Welcome to the Oncology service at NDSR

You and your pet have been referred to the Oncology service at NDSR. There are 8 of us on the team, supported by over a hundred people across the wider hospital. Our aim is to design and deliver a bespoke treatment plan for every cat or dog who comes to see us. This can mean very different things for different pets and carers.

The following information is to introduce the team members to you, as well as walking through the process of a visit to us. We know that no-one wants to have to come and see us and that it can be a very emotional, sad and concerning time. Everyone handles this differently - so please let us know if there is anything that we can do to help you or your pet.

What will happen?

Initial appointment

An initial appointment is 1 hour long. We use this time to assess your pet's condition and find out your expectations and wishes as to what happens next. We do not need to use the whole hour or we can use more if needed. Before the appointment, we will review all the information sent to us by your practice. When you arrive, we will then:

- **Ask you questions about what has led to this point.** We can learn a lot from this and it is important for us to hear in your own words how your cat or dog is feeling and behaving.
- **Examine your pet.** This may be very minimal or avoided completely if they are very nervous.
- **Discuss the options.** We understand that some people like a lot of details whereas others may prefer only to hear our tailored recommendation. There will often be several options, including only palliative treatment. There is no pressure to go ahead with any particular option and, if appropriate, you can go home and think about things. We will provide a written breakdown of the options if this is helpful.
- **From there, we will start to formulate the ongoing plan.** This could be admission to the hospital on the same day for more tests or treatment. This may require your cat or dog to be sedated which is why we ask for them not to have had any food that morning if it is safe to do so. It may not always be possible to have investigations on the day of the appointment, so your pet may stay overnight or be admitted another day. We may also consider starting treatment as an outpatient that day or to go home and consider what to do next.

- **After the initial visit, we will call with any outstanding results and communicate our findings and opinions to you and your vets.** Your pet may be booked for surgery, or other diagnostics with us. The ongoing management might be with us at NDSR or could be at your referring vets. We are very happy to provide ongoing care and support as best as possible even if you aren't coming back to us.
- **Finding the best plan for treatment requires strong communication between us.** We know that everyone has different preferences for how to do so- we're happy to talk in person, phone, email or video call as you prefer and as needed.



Surgery

Many, although not all cancers, can be cured or effectively managed with surgery. We have an amazing team of soft tissue surgeons who work closely with us. Surgery usually involves an admission into the hospital the night before or the morning of the surgery (in which case we will ask you to withhold breakfast, but water is okay). Depending on the surgery, your dog might be sent home the same day, the next day (most common), or after a few days. The hospitalisation is either to monitor the initial success of the surgery or more commonly to administer pain relief in a way which cannot be done at home.

Chemotherapy

We administer many different types of chemotherapy, some injections and tablets. The format of a chemotherapy appointment is a check that your pet is well and the cancer is responding as we expect, followed by blood tests and then administration of the drug. This process can take from 30 minutes to a few hours depending on the type of medication. We have another [booklet](#) detailing more about how and why we use chemotherapy.

Electrochemotherapy

We are pioneers of electrochemotherapy treatment in the UK and this is an effective treatment for many types of cancer. It is administered with the aid of a short general anaesthetic and on an outpatient basis. Treatment may be repeated two weeks later and we always like an update, with photos if you can, from you a week after treatment – either by phone or at oncology@nds.co.uk.

Our aim is to work out the best treatment plan for you and your pet. This may be done on the first visit or may take several. You are a very important part of this process and please let us know if you think that there could be anything that we do differently. We can be contacted at 01883741440 or oncology@nds.co.uk.

Who are we?

We have a team of 8 people who are all committed to providing our goal of delivering the best treatment plan for you and your pet. You might meet only one of us.....or could meet all of us! We work very collaboratively and are always seeking each other's opinion and learning from each other.

Your appointment will usually be booked with one of our vets. Our resident and intern vets will always be closely supervised by a specialist vet. Our nurses are the linchpins of the team, who administer chemotherapy, care for inpatients and often admit and discharge patients from the hospital.

We all work to make sure your pet's visit is as stress free as it can be - whether by bribing them with treats or knowing that they don't like to be touched on their sensitive paws.

Here is a brief introduction to the people you may meet:

Anita

"I graduated as a RVN in 2015 after previously working in the pharmaceutical industry for several years. I have worked at NDSR for 5 years where I started as a rotating nurse covering all areas of the hospital- wards, diagnostics and theatre, 4 years ago I became a static oncology nurse and more recently have completed my post graduate certificate in advanced veterinary nursing specialising in oncology. When I am not at work I enjoy looking after my two French bulldogs, being outdoors, going to the cinema and travelling the world".



Debbie

"I qualified as a vet nurse in 1988 and have been with North Downs since it began. I put my nursing on hold whilst my children were young but stayed with the practice working in insurance and purchasing. Seven years ago, I returned to nursing and joined the Oncology team where I have been ever since. I have a very hairy Tibetan Terrier who comes to work with me and spends his day pretending to be a rug in the clinicians office, and two cats that bring me unwanted presents on a regular basis. When I'm not working, I spend my time sewing, decorating cakes, reading, going to the cinema, visiting historic houses, and clearing up the unwanted presents from my cats".



Francesca

"I graduated from the University of Perugia in Italy in 2000. After an internship in a large private oncology referral practice in the UK, I then completed a three year residency in Small Animal Oncology at the Royal Veterinary College. In 2012 I was then awarded a Masters Degree in Veterinary Medicine with a thesis in feline mediastinal lymphoma. After passing my American Diploma in Oncology in 2013, I became an American recognised Specialist in Oncology".



Gerry

"I have been with North Downs since the very early days, creating the first Oncology service for pets in the South East. I have a beautiful, intelligent and charming wife and two delightful and athletic children who used to keep me fit by making me participate in triathlons. I love all pets but love my own cats the most, especially Sasha, the eternal kitten who has condescended to have her picture taken with me!"



Katherine

"I have worked at NDSR since 2021, before that I worked at the University of Liverpool, the Royal Veterinary College, a general practice in Kent, and I studied at Cambridge University. I really value getting to know my patients, and my main focus is their quality of life and making their hospital visits as enjoyable as possible. I particularly love my feline patients, including those with "cattitude" at the vets. Outside of work I like spending time with my cat Mowzer, who shares my love of cheese and being in the garden".



Sofia

"I graduated from Portugal in 2016 and have worked at NDSR since 2020. I am currently finishing my speciality in Oncology and also doing a PhD about electrochemotherapy and soft tissue sarcomas. My goal is to provide my patients the best care possible while at the hospital and to improve their quality of life. Outside of work, I really treasure spending time with my family, friends and my (not impressed by the picture) cat Clooney. Some of my favourite things include chocolate, sun and traveling the world".



Mike

"I have been an oncology vet at NDSR since 2020. Before that, I worked in general practice and did further training to become a specialist in Glasgow. I have researched mast cell tumours and electrochemotherapy and enjoy training students and vets in oncology. However, my greatest passion is trying to maintain the human – animal bond and allow your cat or dog to live as happily and stress-free as possible. At home, I have two young kids and two old cats! It has taken 5 years, but it is lovely to see them now becoming friends".



Maria

"I graduated from Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Cluj (Romania) in 2019. I have worked for a few years in general practice in Ireland. I decided to move to UK 2 years ago, for further training in becoming an oncologist. When I'm not working, I like to spend the time at the gym, at a concert, or traveling".



North Downs

specialist referrals



North Downs Specialist Referrals

The Friesian Buildings 3 & 4,
The Brewerstreet Dairy Business Park,
Brewer Street,
Bletchingley,
RH1 4QP

Telephone: 01883 741440

Email: enquiries@ndsr.co.uk

ndsr.co.uk