

GASTROINTESTINAL MALIGNANCIES

Inoperable Gastrointestinal Malignancies

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There are unfortunately many inoperable or recurrent gastrointestinal malignancies which have disabling or life-threatening complications because the malignancy is obstructing a portion of the gastrointestinal tract. Previously, such obstructions needed to be treated surgically even though further surgery would not be able to cure the malignancy.

Expanding metal stents are now available which can be inserted with a gastroscope, duodenoscope, or colonoscope with minimal patient inconvenience or discomfort. These stents expand within the portion of the gastrointestinal tract which has been obstructed by tumour, thereby keeping the tract open and functioning.

Areas which are accessible to endoscopic stenting include:

- Oesophagus
- Stomach
- Duodenum
- Upper small intestine
- Colon
- Bile ducts

Usually these stents are easy to insert and provide good palliation for many months. Sometimes the tumour grows into and around the stent but this can usually be corrected by the insertion of a further stent.

