

Diagnosing cancer in primary care: results from the National Cancer Diagnosis Audit

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Background

'Continual improvements in diagnostic processes are needed to minimise the proportion of patients with cancer who experience diagnostic delays.' This research aimed to 'characterise key aspects of the diagnostic process for cancer and to generate baseline measures for future re-audit.'



Methods

Information in the English National Cancer Registry was supplemented with information collected from GPs in the National Cancer Diagnosis Audit (NCDA). Data were collected on 17,042 patients with a new diagnosis of cancer during 2014 from 439 GP practices.



Results

- 72% of patients first presented at the GP surgery (or had a home visit)
- 74% received specialist referral within two consultations (52% via Two Week Wait route)
- Median time from presentation to diagnosis was 40 days, with median primary care interval of 5 days
- 45% of patients had at least one primary care-led investigation before referral
- 76% of patients had one or more existing comorbidities (21% had three or more)
- GPs deemed there to have been an avoidable diagnostic delay in 22% of cases
- Safety netting was recorded in 44% of cases



Conclusions

'The findings identify avenues for quality improvement activity and provide a baseline for future audit of the impact of 2015 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance on management and referral of suspected cancer.'

Full reference: Swann R, McPhail S, Witt J, Shand B, Abel GA, Hiom S, Rashbass J, Lyratzopoulos G, Rubin G; National Cancer Diagnosis Audit Steering Group. Diagnosing cancer in primary care: results from the National Cancer Diagnosis Audit. *Br J Gen Pract*. 2018 Jan;68(666):e63-e72
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29255111/>

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