An audit of cancer diagnosis in primary care

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Results 1: Timeliness of Two Week Wait Referrals

• The National Audit of Cancer Diagnosis in Primary Care proposes that GP assessment and referral should be completed within 31 days. The average time to referral for the GP practice was found to be 21 days.

• 65% of the patients who consulted their GP had just 1-2 consultations before being referred, the same percentage as in the National Audit of Cancer Diagnosis.

Figure 1: Audit Results for the Average Time to Urgent Referral for Common Cancers

Results 2: Routes to Diagnosis

• At the GP practice 59% of cancers were diagnosed following a 2 week wait referral, compared to 25% in a national study.

• Suggests high levels of adherence to the NICE guidelines for the recognition and referral of suspected cancer.

• 11% of patients diagnosed after an emergency presentation, compared to 24% nationally.

• Emergency presentations are associated with lower one-year survival rates, supported by the results showing that 40% of patients who presented as an emergency were dead as of July 2016 compared to 32% of the patients who were referred as a two week wait.

Figure 2: Comparing Routes to Diagnosis in the GP Practice to National Data

Conclusion and Recommendations

The practice was found to be maintaining high standards in cancer diagnosis, adhering to NICE guidelines and referring patients in a timely manner. This resulted in a better performance than the national average in certain measures of cancer diagnosis.

The following recommendations were made following discussion with the practice-GPs:

• Review measures for dealing with abnormal blood results.

• Educate patients about alarm symptoms and when to return if their symptoms do not resolve.

• Repeat the audit to assess the impact of the updated NICE guidelines (NG12) for the referral of suspected cancer.

References

1. Neal RD, Tharmarathan P, France B, et al. Is increased time to diagnosis and treatment in symptomatic cancer associated with poorer outcomes?


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