



National Cancer Action Team
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Dear Colleague,

Acute Oncology– Including Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression Measures for the Manual for Cancer Services

I am writing to let you know that following a period of consultation the Acute Oncology Measures are being issued today as part of the Manual for Cancer Services. A copy of the measures can be found in the Cancer Section on the Department of Health web-site or the CQUINS web-site www.cquins.nhs.uk.

It is the intention to add the Acute Oncology Measures to the Manual for Cancer Services.

The Purpose of the Manual for Cancer Services

The Manual for Cancer Services is an integral part of Improving Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer and aligns with the aims of the Coalition Government: to deliver health outcomes that are among the best in the world. The Manual supports the National Cancer Peer Review quality assurance programme for cancer services and enables quality improvement both in terms of clinical and patient outcomes.

Substantial progress has been made in cancer in the last decade, particularly since the publication of the NHS Cancer Plan in 2000. However, major challenges remain and in January 2011 Improving Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer was published. The strategy sets out how the future direction for cancer will be aligned with Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS in addition to meeting its stated aim to saving an additional 5,000 lives every year by 2014/15, aiming to narrow the inequalities gap at the same time.

The strategy acknowledges the importance of comprehensive information about cancer services for individual members of the public, cancer patients and their carers, healthcare professionals and commissioners.

Although the NHS is not mandated to adhere to the measures in the Manual for Cancer Services, it is used by the National Cancer Peer Review Programme as part of the assessment of cancer services and to provide a ready specification for commissioning of cancer services within a given locality. It identifies the characteristics of service that are likely to have a significant impact on health outcomes. It is intended that those characteristics should help those involved in planning, commissioning, organising and providing cancer services to identify gaps in provision and to support the quality assurance of services enabling quality improvements.

The National Cancer Peer Review Programme, which is led by the National Cancer Action Team and includes expert clinical and user representation, provides important information about the quality of cancer services across the country and supports the development of leadership, self regulation and governance.

The peer review programme is changing its emphasis to focus on both clinical and patient outcomes. In order to achieve this, 'Clinical Lines of Enquiry' have been introduced and it is intended these outcome indicators will form part of the measures along with a reduced number of structure and process measures.

The development of cancer measures is an ongoing process in order to:

- reflect new NICE Quality standards and clinical guidelines and revisions to existing NICE guidance;
- allow greater influence by users of cancer services and their carers;
- allow greater influence by clinicians
- take account of possible modifications to measures following peer review visits;
- ensure the scope of measures encompasses the broader implementation of the Improving Outcomes: A strategy for Cancer.
- reflect new initiatives such as lapco, information prescriptions

Acute Oncology Measures

The Acute Oncology measures reflect the recommendations of the National Chemotherapy Advisory Group (NCAG) report 'Chemotherapy services in England: ensuring quality and safety'. It is acknowledged that there will be variation in the pace of implementation of the NCAG recommendations given current financial constraints and that any reconfiguration will need to take account of the government's vision for locally led NHS service changes. See link below for further information:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/MediaCentre/Pressreleases/DH_116290

I should be grateful for your help in bringing the publication of the Acute Oncology Measures to the attention of all those in your organisation who are involved in the commissioning or provision of cancer services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Parsons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'S'.

Stephen Parsons
Director
National Cancer Action Team