

□ Press release from the Federal Centre of Healthcare Expertise (KCE) – 03/07/2008
“Following the quality of rectum cancer treatment in order to improve it: a first in Belgium”

A multidisciplinary group of bowel cancer specialists (PROCARE) has just developed, under the lead of the Federal Centre of Healthcare Expertise (KCE), the quality criteria to monitor and, where possible, improve the quality of care provided to patients with rectum cancer. This is a pilot project for Belgium that might become the starting point for other similar projects.

The rectum is the last part of the large intestine, just before the anus. Each year, approximately 1,900 diagnoses of cancer of the rectum are raised and it is estimated that 450 patients die as a result of this disease. This form of cancer requires very specific care, especially on a surgery level.

In Belgium, as in other countries, there are still large differences between hospitals on the issue of rectum cancer treatment and therefore, also in the results achieved. A group of eminent Belgian cancer specialists consider for several years that there is an urgent need for standardisation and quality monitoring in this area. That is why PROCARE (PROject on CANcer of the REctum) was created. It is a multidisciplinary working group bringing together all professionals involved in treating rectum cancer.

In collaboration with the KCE, the group drafted in 2007 a national guideline with recommendations for diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of rectum cancers. The next step consisted, for this working group, to develop 40 indicators to measure the treatment quality of this cancer. The number of patients who died after five years or as a result of the surgery intervention illustrates such indicators.

In order to monitor the quality, reliable data must of course be available. The Cancer Registry has a central role to play in the recording of such data, which will be a basis for the measurement of indicators and their interpretation. Finally, the data will give feedback to hospitals. Based on these feedbacks, cancer treatment will be adapted to the guideline, which is all the better for the patient. Many Belgian hospitals are motivated to participate in such an exercise: more than 50% of them are bringing together, for 2 years already, the data needed and is looking forward to the feedback. The quality monitoring can start as of this year.

The full text of these recommendations is available on the KCE website: www.kce.fgov.be ("publications" section) under reference KCE Reports vol 81B.

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