About this Release

Quarterly update of Cancer Waiting Times statistics, reporting on the time patients have waited for their first cancer treatment. The information provided addresses two different standards: 62 days from referral to first cancer treatment for patients urgently referred with a suspicion of cancer; and 31 days from decision to treat to their first treatment, regardless of the route of referral. The data are presented by NHS Board, Cancer Network and Cancer Type, up to 31 March 2012.

Key Points

In the period January – March 2012:

- Across Scotland, 94.8% of patients started treatment within 62 days of urgent referral with suspicion of cancer, a decrease from 96.9% during the period October - December 2011.

- 97.9% of patients started treatment within 31 days of decision to treat, regardless of the route of referral, which is similar to the period October - December 2011.

Background

In October 2008, the Scottish Government published Better Cancer Care - An Action Plan which would:

- Extend the 62-day urgent ‘referral to treatment’ target from patients previously subject to cancer waiting times targets to include patients that had had a positive cancer screening test, and to all patients referred urgently with a suspicion of cancer.

- Introduce a new 31-day target for all patients diagnosed with cancer (whatever their route of referral) from decision to treat to treatment.
The statements in the Action Plan formed the basis for new targets for cancer waiting times, where 95% of all eligible patients should wait no longer than 31 or 62 days. A 5% tolerance level was applied to these targets, as for some patients it may not have been clinically appropriate for treatment to begin within target. Performance against these targets was achieved by December 2011, the timescale agreed by the Scottish Government. These targets are considered as National Standards from 1st April 2012 and continue to be published on a quarterly basis.

The Information Services Division works in partnership with the Scottish Government Cancer Performance Support Team and NHS Boards to measure NHSScotland’s performance against the National Standards, and to provide a wide range of users with faster access to the statistics they need.

Contact

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Further Information

Further information can be found in the Full Publication Report or on the ISD website.