Significant reduction in waiting time for diagnosis and treatment of head and neck cancer in Denmark in 2010 compared to 2002

First results of the Danish national fast track program for cancer

Tumor progression in H&N SCC:
- for 1/3 pts. within 2 weeks
- for 2/3 pts. within 4 weeks

RECIST 1.0
Five hospital authorities in DK:

• Fast track clinical pathways
• Diagnostic packages
• Patients with suspicion of cancer is given the highest priority in the health care system
Diagnostic package:
From symptom of head and neck cancer to final treatment decision in 7 working days

Suspicin of cancer

Day 1-2
ENT exam
Fibreoptic
Biopsy
US neck

Day 3-4
Ortopan
Dentist
CT/MRI
PET
Chest xray

Day 5-6
GA exam
Staging
Dental

Day 7
Tumor board
Tx plan
Inform patient
Reserved slots for clinical examination

Pre-booked radiology

Fast pathology (1-3 days)

Coordinator

MDT board (twice weekly)
Results: Median intervals 2002 - 2010

Waiting time reduced by 4 weeks from 2002 to 2010. But 41 days are still too long compared to the new national standards (21 days). Patient satisfaction has improved.

Too early to evaluate survival impact

N=422
Summary and Conclusions

• Based on research data, and influenced by public media demand, a national fast track policy for all patients with suspicion of cancer was implemented in 2008.

• The total course, from first contact to start of treatment, must be without any delays, i.e. 3 weeks for most cancer types.

• All Danish head and neck oncology centres now have integrated multidisciplinary teams, and are using parallel diagnostic packages.

• The current nationwide survey shows that time from first contact to treatment start has been reduced with 4 weeks from 69 to 41 calendar days in 2010, compared to 2002, i.e. better, but still a long way to go...

• Patient satisfaction has greatly improved. It is still too early to evaluate survival impact.