

Does distance from tertiary referral centre impact access to treatment for rectal cancer?

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Introduction

The Health Service Executive initiated a programme of centralisation of cancer services following a recommendation in The National Cancer Strategy for Ireland published in 2006. Centralisation to a smaller number of high-volume, specialist centres had the aim of optimising treatment and improving survival outcomes. Although patient outcomes have improved, patients residing in areas remote from the hospital are required to travel further distances for care.

AIMS

The practical impact of patients being required to travel long distances for cancer care remains uncertain. This study aimed to assess the impact of this on access to provision of care.

METHODS

A retrospective analysis of all patients with Rectal Cancer discussed at Beaumont colorectal cancer MDT between January 2012 and July 2019 was performed.



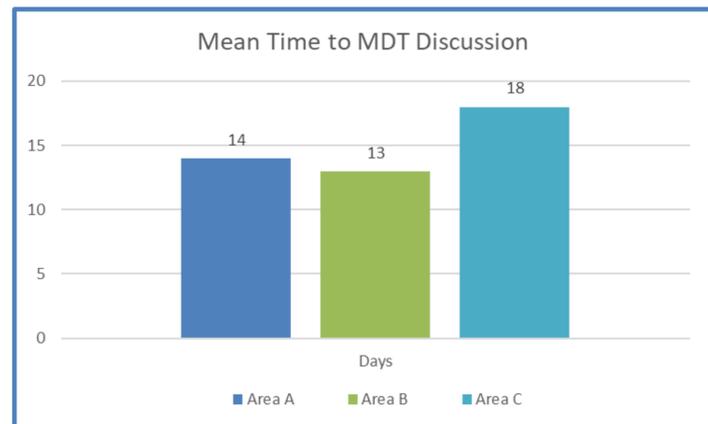
Patients were categorized into three groups based on proximity to treatment centre.

Time interval between initial diagnosis and first discussion at the colorectal cancer multidisciplinary team (MDT) meeting, time from MDT discussion to commencement of recommended neoadjuvant radiotherapy and neoadjuvant chemotherapy were compared.

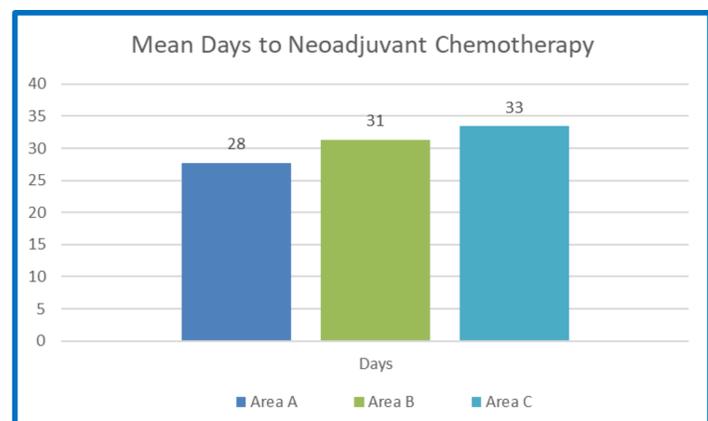
Data analysis was performed using GraphPad. This study was approved by Beaumont ethics board.

RESULTS

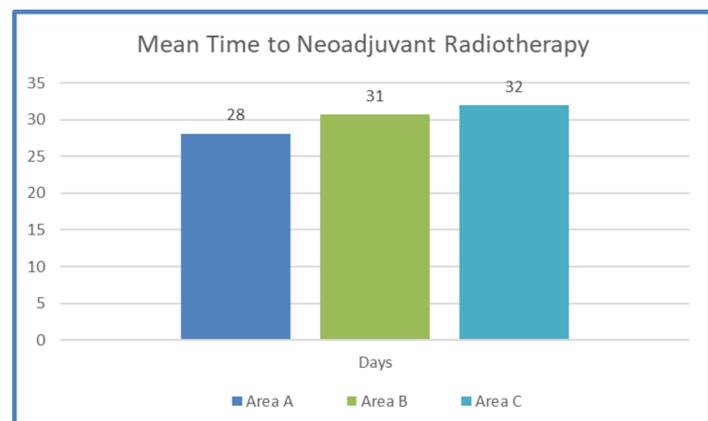
Average time from diagnosis to discussion at MDT was 15 days; 14 days in area A, 13 days in area B ($p=0.568$) and 18 days in area C ($p=0.289$).



293 patients received Neoadjuvant Chemotherapy. Average time from MDT to commencement was 31 days. 28 days in area A compared to 31 days in area B ($p=0.009$) and 33 days in area C ($p=0.006$).



277 patients received Neoadjuvant Radiotherapy. Average time from MDT to commencement was 30 days. 28 days in area A, 31 days in area B ($p=0.064$) and 32 days in area C ($p=0.068$).



CONCLUSION

Centralisation of rectal cancer care hasn't disadvantage patients travelling further distances in regard time to treatment in the metrics examined in our study.

Demographics		
Total No. of patients		669
Age(median)		66
Male		464 (69.4%)
Distance from Center		
	Distance	no of patients
Area A	<20 miles	368
Area B	20-50miles	225
Area C	>50miles	76