

Statistics Release



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**Health, Social Services
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MÄNNYSTRIE O

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an Fowk Siccar**

01 April 2010

Northern Ireland Cancer Waiting Times – October, November and December 2009

This statistics release gives details of the waiting times for patients accessing cancer services at hospitals in Northern Ireland during the months of October, November and December 2009.

Data contained within this release reports on the performance of Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, measured against the three Priorities for Action (PfA) targets for 2009/10, and relates to waiting times for cancer services in Northern Ireland during October, November and December 2009.

Waiting Times for a First Assessment with a Breast Cancer Specialist

Achievement of the 2009/10 PfA target relating to waiting times for a first assessment with a Breast Cancer Specialist requires that ‘from April 2009, all urgent breast cancer referrals should be seen within 14 days’.

Table 1 reports on the performance of all Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland towards the target for all urgent referrals for the months of October, November and December 2009.

Table 1: Reporting on the 14 day waiting time target from referral to a first assessment with a breast cancer specialist in Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland¹

October – December 2009

	No. of patients first seen by a breast cancer specialist during the month following all urgent referrals for suspected cancer								
	No. that waited 14 days or less			Total Treated			Percentage (%)		
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec
Belfast	230	237	226	230	237	226	100.0	100.0	100.0
Northern	60	62	77	60	62	77	100.0	100.0	100.0
Southern	130	146	134	130	146	134	100.0	100.0	100.0
South Eastern	117	101	114	117	101	114	100.0	100.0	100.0
Western	153	176	134	154	176	134	99.4	100.0	100.0
Northern Ireland	690	722	685	691	722	685	99.9	100.0	100.0

Source: Departmental Return SDR2

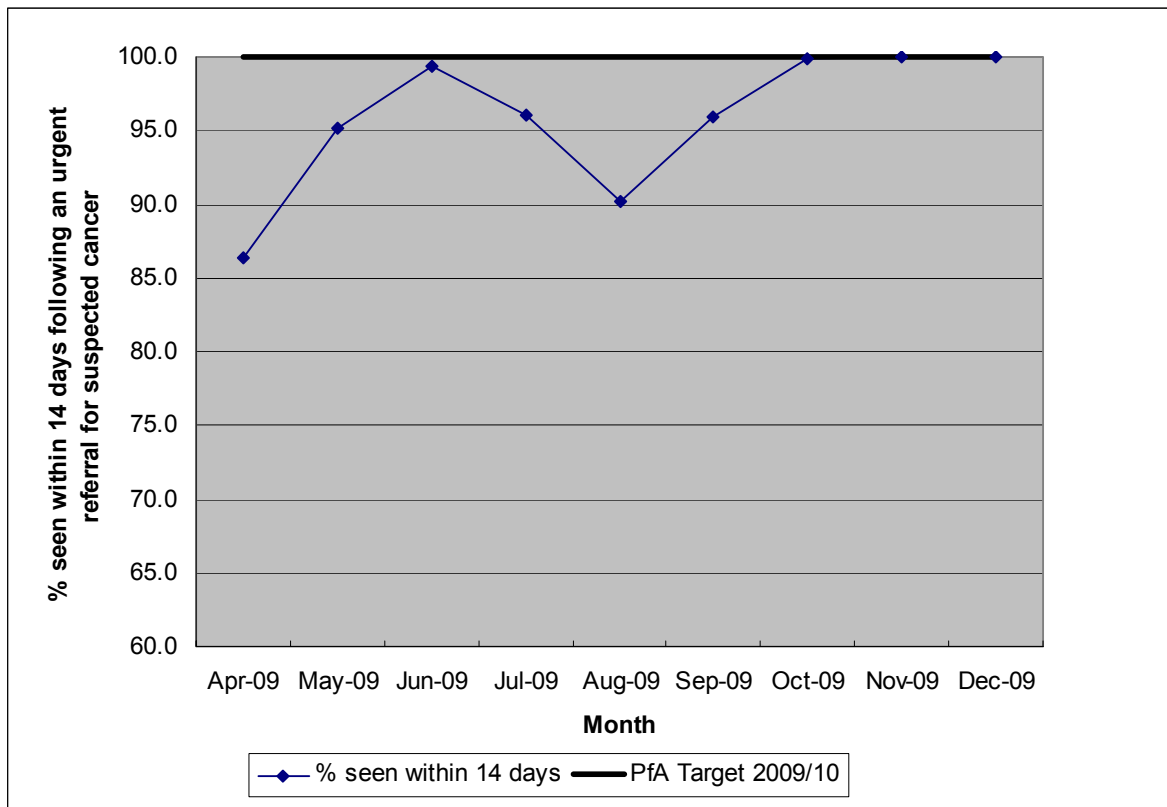
¹Refer to Technical Notes – points 1-4.

- During October 2009, one patient waited longer than 14 days for an appointment with a breast specialist, following an urgent referral for suspected cancer. This was within the Western HSC Trust.
- During the months of November and December 2009, all patients referred were seen within the 14 day maximum waiting time set in 2009/10 PfA target.

Trends

Reporting of the current 14 day breast cancer waiting time target began in April 2009. The percentage of patients seen within 14 days increased over the first three months to a position in June 2009 where 99.3% of patients were seen within the target. Performance against the target decreased over the next two months, falling to 90.2% of patients being seen within 14 days. The waiting time position has improved since then with 100% of patients being seen by breast specialist within 14 days of urgent referral for suspected breast cancer in both November and December 2009. These trends are outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Percentage of patients seen by a breast specialist within 14 days of referral by a breast specialist following an urgent referral for suspected cancer – Monthly Trends April 2009 to December 2009



Source: Departmental Return SDR2

Waiting Times for Treatment

Achievement of the 2009/10 PfA target relating to waiting times for treatment following a decision to treat requires that 'from April 2009, 98% of patients should commence treatment within 31 days of the decision to treat'.

Tables 2 and 3 report on the performance of Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, and the reporting of waiting times by tumour site, respectively, towards this 31 day target for the months of October, November and December 2009.

Table 2: Reporting on the 31 day target from decision to treat to treatment for all cancers in Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland²

October – December 2009

	No. of patients first treated for Cancer								
	Treated within 31 days of a decision to treat being taken			Total Treated			Percentage (%)		
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec
Belfast	298	268	248	310	286	256	96.1	93.7	96.9
Northern	81	91	84	82	91	85	98.8	100.0	98.8
Southern	90	92	72	90	92	72	100.0	100.0	100.0
South Eastern	102	108	99	104	109	100	98.1	99.1	99.0
Western	86	87	93	86	87	94	100.0	100.0	98.9
Northern Ireland	657	646	596	672	665	607	97.8	97.1	98.2

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

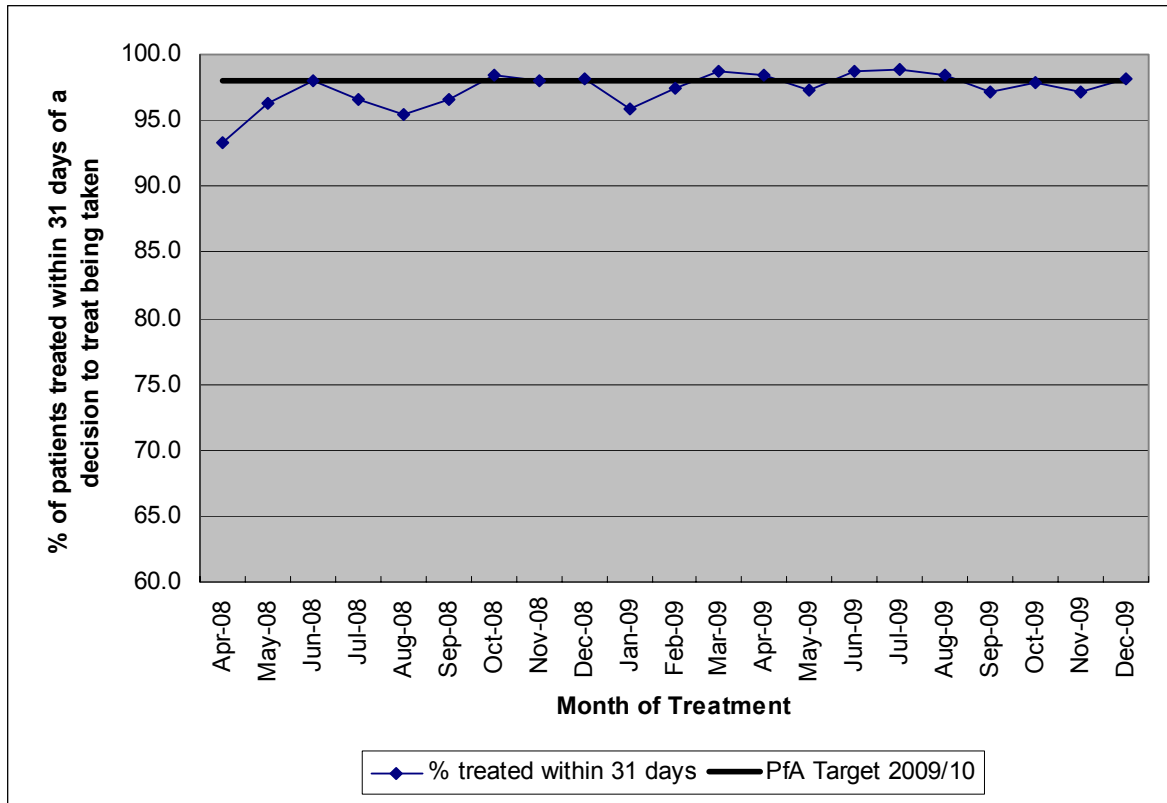
²Refer to Technical Notes – points 1, 5 & 6.

- The 2009/10 PfA target that 98% of patients should commence treatment within 31 days of the decision to treat was met for Northern Ireland as a whole in the month of December.
- During the month of October 2009, 672 patients commenced treatment for cancer following a decision to treat being taken, with 657 (97.8%) treated within 31 days. Of the 15 patients that exceeded the 31 day waiting time, 12 were in the Belfast HSC Trust, one was in the Northern HSC Trust, and two were in the South Eastern Trust.
- In November 2009, 646 (97.1%) of the total 665 patients were treated within 31 days. Of the 19 patients that were not treated within 31 days, 18 were in the Belfast HSC Trust and one was in the South Eastern HSC Trust.
- In December 2009, 596 (98.2%) of the total 607 patients were treated within 31 days of a decision to treat being taken. Of the 11 patients that waited longer than 31 days for treatment, eight were in the Belfast HSC Trust, one was in the Northern HSC Trust, one was in the South Eastern HSC Trust and one was in the Western HSC Trust.

Trends

The reporting of the 31 day waiting time target began in April 2008. Between the months of April and June 2008 there was an upward trend in the percentage of patients treated within 31 days, to a position of 98.1% of patients being treated within 31 days of the decision to treat in June 2008. The percentage of patients treated within the waiting time target decreased over the next two months, with 95.5% of patients treated within 31 days in August 2008, the lowest percentage since April 2008. The waiting time position improved over the next four months, before dropping to 95.8% in January 2009. Since then, the trend has improved, and remained fairly static reaching a peak in July 2009 with 98.9% of patients being treated within 31 days.

Figure 2: Percentage of patients treated within 31 days of a decision to treat being taken – Monthly Trends April 2008 to December 2009³



³Refer to Technical Notes – point 8.

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

Table 3: Reporting on the 31 day target from decision to treat to treatment by tumour site⁴

October – December 2009

Cancer Site	No. of patients first treated for Cancer								
	Treated within 31 days of a decision to treat being taken			Total Treated			Percentage (%)		
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brain Central Tumour	12	4	5	12	4	5	100.0	100.0	100.0
Breast Cancer	110	122	113	110	124	113	100.0	98.4	100.0
Gynae Cancers	40	43	37	40	43	37	100.0	100.0	100.0
Haematological Cancers	40	33	30	40	33	30	100.0	100.0	100.0
Head/Neck Cancer	25	27	20	25	27	20	100.0	100.0	100.0
Lower Gastrointestinal Cancer	84	81	86	84	82	87	100.0	98.8	98.9
Lung Cancer	85	73	80	87	76	81	97.7	96.1	98.8
Sarcomas	3	2	1	3	2	1	100.0	100.0	100.0
Skin Cancers	83	86	80	84	86	81	98.8	100.0	98.8
Upper Gastrointestinal Cancer	49	37	47	50	37	47	98.0	100.0	100.0
Urological Cancer	114	129	90	125	142	98	91.2	90.8	91.8
Other	12	9	7	12	9	7	100.0	100.0	100.0
Northern Ireland	657	646	596	672	665	607	97.8	97.1	98.2

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

⁴Refer to Technical Notes – points 1, 5-7 & 14.

- During October 2009, 15 patients waited longer than 31 days for treatment from decision to treat being taken. Of these, eleven were diagnosed with urological cancer, two with lung cancer, one with skin cancer, and one with upper gastrointestinal cancer.
- In November 2009, 19 of the total 665 patients were not treated within 31 days. Thirteen were given a diagnosis of urological cancer, three with lung cancer, two with breast cancer, and one with lower gastrointestinal cancer.
- In December 2009, eight of the 11 patients waiting longer than 31 days had urological cancer, with an additional one person with lower gastrointestinal cancer, one with lung cancer and one with skin cancer.

Waiting Times for Treatment following an Urgent GP referral for Suspect Cancer

Achievement of the 2009/10 Priorities for Action Target relating to waiting times for treatment following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer requires that 'from April 2009, 95% of patients urgently referred with a suspected cancer should begin their first treatment within 62 days'.

Tables 4 and 5 report on the performance of Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, and the reporting of waiting times by tumour site, respectively, towards this 62 day target for the months of October, November and December 2009.

Table 4: Reporting on the 62 day waiting time target from an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer to treatment, for all cancers in Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland⁵

October - December 2009

	No. of patients first treated for Cancer following an urgent GP referral for Suspected Cancer								
	Treated within 62 days from receipt of referral			Total Treated			Percentage (%)		
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec
Belfast	58.5	40.5	47.5	65.0	53.0	55.0	90.0	76.4	86.4
Northern	34.5	34.5	29.0	41.5	39.5	33.0	83.1	87.3	87.9
Southern	22.5	32.0	23.5	22.5	33.5	23.5	100.0	95.5	100.0
South Eastern	30.0	37.5	37.0	34.0	40.5	40.0	88.2	92.6	92.5
Western	28.5	30.5	27.0	30.0	31.5	30.5	95.0	96.8	88.5
Northern Ireland	174	175	164	193	198	182	90.2	88.4	90.1

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

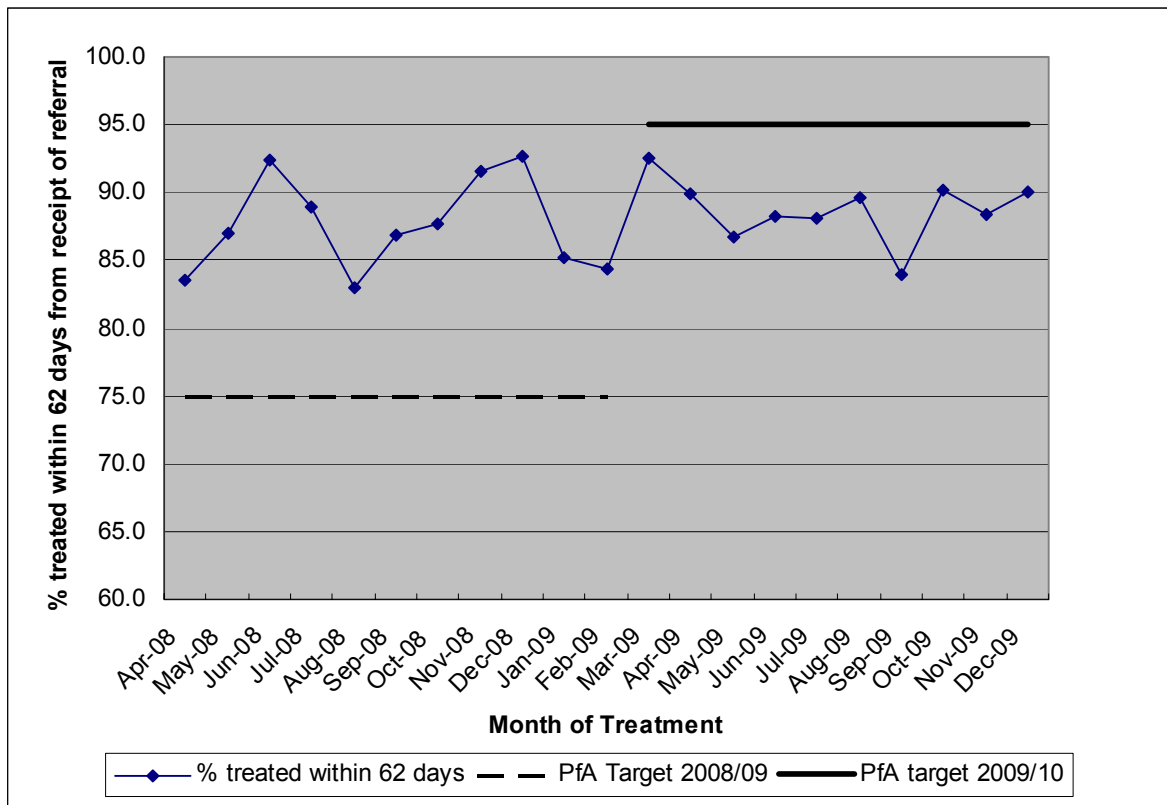
⁵Refer to Technical Notes – points 1, 9-11.

- The 2009/10 PfA target that 95% of patients urgently referred by a GP with a suspected cancer should begin their first treatment within 62 days was not met during the months of October, November or December for Northern Ireland.
- During the month of October 2009, of the 193 patients that commenced treatment for cancer following an urgent referral for suspected cancer (including routine referrals subsequently reclassified as urgent by a cancer specialist), 174 (90.2%) were treated within 62 days. Of the 19 patients that were not treated within 62 days, there were the equivalent of 6.5 in the Belfast HSC Trust, seven in the Northern HSC Trust, four in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 1.5 in the Western HSC Trust.
- In November 2009, 175 (88.4%) of a total of 198 patients were treated within 62 days. Of the 23 patients that were not treated within 62 days, there were the equivalent of 12.5 in the Belfast HSC Trust, five in the Northern HSC trust, 1.5 in the Southern HSC Trust, three in the South Eastern HSC Trust and one in the Western HSC Trust.
- In December 2009, 164 (90.1%) out of 182 patients were treated within 62 days. Of the 18 patients that weren't treated within 62 days, the equivalent of 7.5 were in the Belfast HSC Trust, four in the Northern HSC Trust, three in the Southern HSC Trust and 3.5 in the Western HSC Trust.

Trends⁶

The reporting of the 62 day waiting time target began in April 2008. There was an upward trend between the months of April to June 2008 in the number of patients treated within 62 days, to a position in June 2008 where 92.4% of patients were treated within 62 days of the decision to treat following an urgent referral for suspected cancer. Performance then decreased over the next two months, with 83.0% of patients treated within 62 days in August 2008. This was the waiting time position's lowest point since reporting of the target began. Since then the percentage treated within 62 days has fluctuated, peaking in March 2009, with 92.6% of patients treated within 62 days. The performance target has not been met in Northern Ireland since it was increased in March 2009, from 75% to 95% of patients to be treated within 62 days following an urgent referral for suspected cancer.

Figure 3: Percentage of patients treated within 62 days following an urgent referral for suspected cancer – Monthly Trends April 2008 to December 2009⁶



Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

⁶Refer to Technical Notes – point 12.

Table 5: Reporting on the 62 day waiting time target from an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer to treatment, by tumour site⁷

October - December 2009

Cancer Site	No. of patients first treated for Cancer following an urgent GP referral for Suspected Cancer								
	Treated within 62 days from receipt of referral			Total Treated			Percentage (%)		
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brain Central Tumour	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Breast Cancer	50	50	43	50	50	43	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gynae Cancers	10	12	12	10	12	13	100.0	100.0	92.3
Haematological Cancers	1	1	1	1	1	1	100.0	100.0	100.0
Head/Neck Cancer	6	5	4	6	6	4	100.0	83.3	100.0
Lower Gastrointestinal Cancer	17	17	13	19	18	16	89.5	94.4	81.3
Lung Cancer	18	14	20	21	17	22	85.7	82.4	90.9
Sarcomas	1	0	0	1	0	0	100.0	N/A	N/A
Skin Cancers	30	28	35	30	28	35	100.0	100.0	100.0
Upper Gastrointestinal Cancer	7	7	5	8	10	10	87.5	70.0	50.0
Urological Cancer	30	38	27	42	53	34	71.4	71.7	79.4
Other	4	3	4	5	3	4	80.0	100.0	100.0
Northern Ireland	174	175	164	193	198	182	90.2	88.4	90.1

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

⁷Refer to Technical Notes – points 1, 9-11, & 13-14.

- During the month of October 2009, 19 of the 193 patients waited longer than 62 days for treatment following an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer. Twelve of these patients were diagnosed with urological cancer, three with lung cancer, two with lower gastrointestinal cancer, one with upper gastrointestinal cancer, and one had a tumour site classed as ‘Other’.
- During November 2009, of the 23 patients who were waiting longer than 62 days, 15 were diagnosed with urological cancer, three with lung cancer, three with upper gastrointestinal cancer, one with lower gastrointestinal cancer, and one with head/neck cancer.
- There were 18 patients that were not treated within 62 days of receipt of referral during the month of December 2009. Of these patients seven were classified as having urological cancer, five as having upper gastrointestinal cancer, three as having lower gastrointestinal cancer, two as having lung cancer and one of these patients as having gynaecological cancer.

Technical Notes

1. The sources of data contained in this bulletin are the Departmental Return SDR 2 (Table 1) and the Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS) (Tables 2-5).
2. Data contained in Table 1 relates to all urgent referrals (excluding those that have been reclassified as routine by the breast specialist) for suspect breast cancer, and routine referrals that have subsequently been reclassified as urgent by a breast specialist. Figures also include all patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health and Social Care hospitals.
3. The completed waiting time in Table 1 is measured from the date an initial breast cancer referral is first received by the Provider HSC Trust, and ends on the date that the patient had attended their first outpatient appointment with a breast cancer specialist. Adjustments are made to the completed waiting time in the event of a patient cancelling or failing to attend a first outpatient appointment.
4. Figures provided in Table 1 reflect all urgent referrals for breast cancer both from GP's and other practitioners. The 2009/10 target states that from April 2009, all urgent breast cancer referrals should be seen within 14 days. Between March 2008 and February 2009 this target applied only to referrals that were initially referred by a GP.
5. Data contained in Tables 2 and 3 relate to patients who received a first definitive treatment for cancer (having been given an 'International Classification of Diseases 10' diagnosis) during the months of October, November and December 2009, irrespective of their source of referral. Data include treatment for all cancers, with the exception of basal cell carcinoma. Figures also include all patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health and Social Care hospitals. Patients that have not been given an ICD 10 diagnosis are excluded.
6. The completed waiting time in Tables 2 and 3 is measured from the date a decision was taken to treat a patient for cancer and ends on the date that the patient received their first definitive treatment for cancer. Adjustments are made to the completed waiting time in the event of a patient cancelling or self deferring treatment or as a result of suspension for either medical or social reasons.
7. Table 3 reflects the number of patients that were treated in 31 days or less for each Tumour site. Tumour sites are an aggregation of applicable ICD 10 codes.
8. The Pfa target stating that 98% of patients should wait no longer than 31 days from the date on which the decision to treat was taken to the date of first definitive treatment has remained unchanged since its introduction in March 2008.
9. Data contained in Tables 4 and 5 relate to all patients who received a first definitive treatment for cancer (having been given an ICD 10 diagnosis) during the months of October, November and December 2009, following an urgent referral for suspect cancer from a General Practitioner, and routine GP referrals that have subsequently been reclassified as urgent by a cancer specialist. Data relate to urgent GP referrals for all cancers with the exception of basal cell carcinoma. Figures also include all patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health and Social Care hospitals. Referrals from sources other than a GP, routine referrals from a GP and patients who have not been given an ICD 10 diagnosis are excluded.

10. The completed waiting time in Tables 4 and 5 is measured from the date an initial urgent referral for suspect cancer from a GP is received by the Provider Health and Social Care Trust and ends on the date the patient received their first definitive treatment for cancer. Adjustments are made to the completed waiting time in the event of a patient cancelling or self deferring treatment or as a result of suspension for either medical or social reasons.
11. The measurement of a patient's waiting time in Tables 4 and 5, from initial urgent GP referral to first definitive treatment, includes cases in which a patient was initially referred to a particular Health and Social Care Trust for consultant assessment but was then subsequently transferred to another Health and Social Care Trust for treatment. In such cases, the responsibility for reporting that patient is shared, with 0.5 allocated to the Trust where the patient was first seen for assessment and 0.5 to the Trust of first treatment. For example, if a patient is initially referred for assessment in the South Eastern HSC Trust and is then transferred to the Belfast HSC Trust where they receive treatment 50 days after their initial GP referral, both the South Eastern and Belfast HSC Trusts will report 0.5 of a patient waiting less than 62 days. Similarly, if such a patient waited over 62 days for treatment, both the Trust where the patient was first seen and the Trust where the patient was treated would report 0.5 of a patient waiting more than 62 days.
12. Between April 2008 and February 2009, the Priorities for Action Target relating to waiting time for treatment following an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer required that 'at least 75% of patients urgently referred with a suspect cancer should begin their first definitive treatment within 62 days of GP referral'. From March 2009 this target increased to 95% of patients. These different targets are reflected in the trend graph for the 62 day target.
13. Table 5 reflects the number of patients that were treated in 62 days or less for each tumour site. Tumour sites are an aggregation of applicable ICD 10 codes.
14. Information on the grouping of ICD10 Codes by tumour site is available from Hospital Information Branch on request.
15. Information on waiting times for the months of January, February and March 2010 will be published on 24 June 2010.
16. Data contained within this publication are Official Statistics.

Additional Information

Further information on waiting lists in Northern Ireland is available from:

Office Information Manager
Hospital Information Branch
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Annexe 2
Castle Buildings
Stormont
BT4 3SQ

E-mail: statistics@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Internet address: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/waiting_times.htm