

Is it time to allow robust guideline driven access to breast imaging for our GP colleagues? - A prospective cohort study on the quality of primary care referrals to a local breast clinic

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Background:

In recent years, referrals from primary care to specialist breast clinics have seen a steady incline in England despite NICE producing robust guidelines for referral into secondary care. Approximately 609,000 patients were referred to a specialist breast clinic in the UK via the 2-week wait suspected cancer pathway in 2019-20 (CancerData NHS, 2021).

Methods:

A prospective cohort study was conducted on 523 females aged over 16, seen face to face in Macclesfield breast clinic. Study endpoints were to assess primary care referral quality and correlation between referral reason and breast clinic diagnosis.

Results:

523 females were included in the analysis. 'Lump' was the most common presenting complaint (50.5%), closely followed by 'pain' (27.0%). The majority of patients were in the 30-70 year age range. All patients underwent a clinical examination. 52.2%

(n=273) had dual imaging (ultrasound and mammogram). 28.3% (n=148) and 5.5% (n=29) respectively had ultrasound or mammogram alone. Only 13.0% of patients required a full triple assessment. 87.4% of patients undergoing clinical examination had

normal or benign findings (P1 and P2). 90.3% of ultrasound and 89.9% of mammogram patients had normal or benign findings: U1 and U2 and, M1 and M2 respectively. 55.9% of patients who underwent biopsy had normal or benign findings (B1 or C1 and B2 or C2). Diagnoses at discharge from clinic were 'normal breasts' (39.6%), 'benign pathology' (54.5%) and 'breast cancer' (5.7%). We found that 38.8% of the presenting complaints referred by the GP correlated with assessment in breast clinic.

Conclusion:

Majority of breast clinic diagnoses are non-sinister. A third correlate with the initial referral reason. Objective proformas, precise national guidelines, GP education and increased open-access breast imaging may improve referral quality.

Biography

Muhammad Chaudhary is currently a FY2 in Breast and General Surgery at Macclesfield District General Hospital. He has graduated with distinction from the University of Manchester in 2020. He is currently completing his PG Cert in Surgery. It is his aspiration to become a Professor in Cardiothoracic Surgery.

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