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PERCENTAGE LOCAL RECURRENCES IN THE NETHERLANDS: A PERFORMANCE INDICATOR?

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Background

To describe the percentage local recurrences within 5 years after surgery (with or without radiotherapy) for primary invasive breast cancer in Dutch hospitals. This percentage is a performance indicator in the Health Care Transparency Programme initiated by the Dutch Health Care Inspectorate.

Methods

All women diagnosed in 2003 with a primary invasive breast cancer for which they underwent surgical treatment, were selected from the Netherlands Cancer Registry (NCR). NCR registration clerks collected additional information on recurrences within 5 years after initial diagnosis. The percentages of local recurrences are presented anonymously by hospital in 'forest'-plots and 'funnel'-plots.

Results

In total 9898 women diagnosed in 2003 with primary breast cancer were treated in one of the 99 Dutch hospitals. Within 5 years 266 local recurrences occurred. The 5-year percentage of local recurrences is 3,03% (95%CI: 2,69% to 3,41%), which is well below the accepted standard of 5%. After breast conserving surgery the 5-year percentage of local recurrence is 2,63% (95%BI: 2,21% to 3,12%), and after mastectomy 3,50% (95%BI: 2,97% to 4,13%). Stratification by hospital shows large variation in recurrence rates (0% - 17%). However, the number of patients treated in most hospitals is too small to provide reliable estimates.

Discussion

The percentage of local recurrences within 5 years after diagnosis in The Netherlands is lower than the accepted standard of 5%. Conclusions on possible differences in quality of care between hospitals cannot be drawn based on these data, due to the low average recurrence rate and the small number of cases per hospital.