

Giving patients a voice about cancer care: should Switzerland do more to collect patients' experiences of cancer care?

Key Messages

Context

One of the three main objectives of a healthcare system is to improve the care and experience of care of people going through the system, by providing high-quality care responding to people's needs (i.e. patient-centered care). This is important because it translates into more positive experiences of care, which in turn can translate into treatments working better and better health.

To evaluate patient-centeredness of care, data need to be collected directly from the patients, asking them about their experiences, such as:

- Whether their values and preferences were respected;
- Whether they received information about their treatment they could easily understand;
- Whether they received enough emotional support; and
- Whether their family and friends were involved in their care as much as wanted.

Cancer care

Cancer is one of the five most frequent non-communicable diseases in Switzerland. As four people out of ten are expected to have cancer during their life, most individuals will encounter cancer, either as a patient or as a caregiver to a family member or friend. Patient-centered care is especially important in cancer care, as cancer has a particular emotional, social and financial burden on patients and their families, in addition to the health burden.

In Switzerland, there is information on the safety and effectiveness of cancer care with the publication of survival rates for example. However, reports from patients themselves about cancer care are missing and needed to complete the assessment of the quality of cancer care and its patient-centeredness.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Develop a position statement on the importance and value of patients' experiences of cancer care.

Recommendation 2: Collect patients' experiences of cancer care at the national level, by implementing a national survey or by integrating data collection in cantonal cancer registries.

Implementation considerations for recommendation 2

The major facilitators for successful implementation and use of patients' reports on experiences of care include:

- A patient-centered healthcare culture supported by management and politics;
- Awareness of the value of patients' reports;
- Involvement of patients in all steps; and
- Sufficient financial resources.

Availability and cost of human resources to collect patients' reports are also an important consideration, as well as privacy and ethical concerns and an adequate IT infrastructure.