

Statistics on Waiting Times for Suspected and Diagnosed Cancer Patients Q4 2012-13 Key Points – Commissioner Based

Background

The document *Improving Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer*¹, and its accompanying *Review of Cancer Waiting Times Standards* (January 2011) recommended that the current waiting time for cancer should be retained. It was identified that shorter waiting times can help to ease patient anxiety and, at best, may lead to earlier diagnosis, quicker treatment, a lower risk of complications, an enhanced patient experience and improved cancer outcomes. The maximum waiting times requirements for cancer are therefore included within the Operating Framework for the NHS in England for 2012-13.

These statistics for Q4 2012-13 (January to March 2013) relate to those maximum waiting time requirements, introduced by the NHS Cancer Plan (2000) and the Cancer Reform Strategy (2007), which are retained in the Operating Framework for the NHS in England for 2012-13.

As with other waiting times measures, the Department of Health does not expect 100% achievement. For any given period, there will be a number of patients who are not available for treatment within the specified timescale because: they elect to delay their treatment (patient choice), are unfit for their treatment or it would be clinically inappropriate to treat them within the standard time. Therefore, the Department has developed 'operational standards'² accounting for the proportion of patients that cannot be seen within the identified timeframe. Additionally, variation in results by trust may come about due to different population structures in the different areas, differences in the case-mix of patients being seen in the area, and differing levels of patient choice.

The difference between the commissioner and provider data releases

The national levels of activity and performance within this summary and release of commissioner-based statistics on waiting times for suspected and diagnosed cancer patients may differ from the equivalent provider based national statistics on cancer waiting times.

This is because these commissioner based statistics only include those patients who can be traced back to an English commissioner using their NHS Number. As a result, the national calculated performance levels may differ slightly between the two datasets.

¹ http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_123371

² http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Dearcolleagueletters/DH_103436

As these commissioner (Primary Care Trust) based statistics are derived from those data submitted by the providers of NHS cancer services, the provider-based National Statistics on waiting times for suspected and diagnosed cancer patients (also published on 31 May 2013) remain the most complete assessment of the performance of the English NHS for Q4 2012-13.

Data Quality

These commissioner based statistics on waiting times for suspected and diagnosed cancer patients are derived from the information made available by providers of NHS services by identifying the commissioning PCTs of all patients via their NHS Number. This means that any significant errors within the provider-based statistics (also published on 31 May 2013) will be reflected in these data for local commissioners.

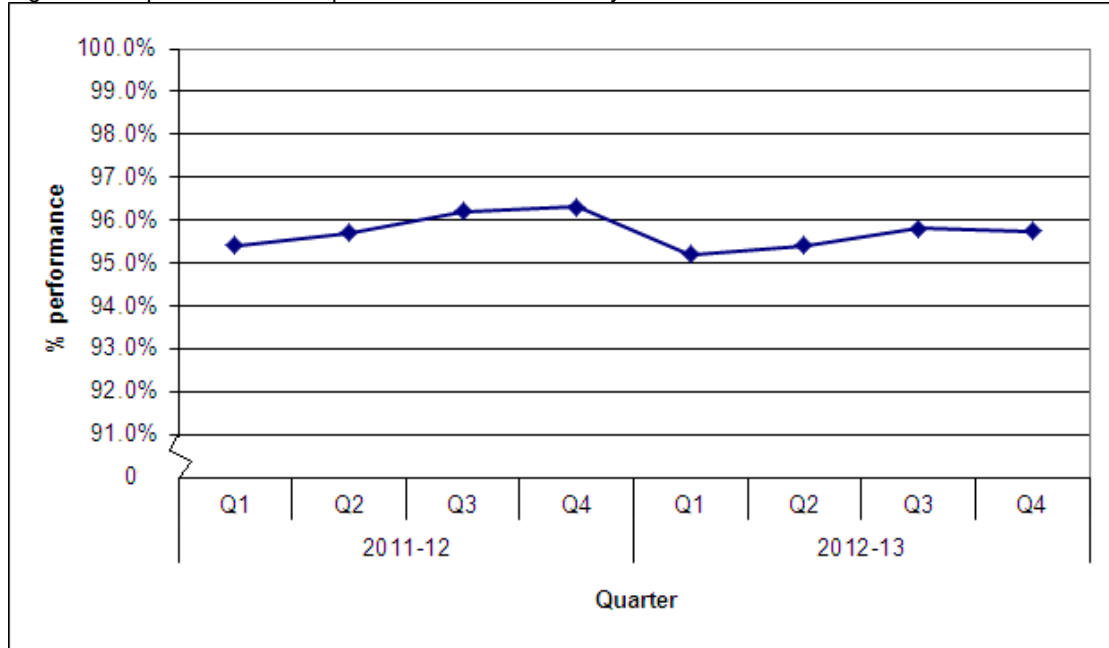
Analysis

A summary of the performance in Quarter 4 2012-13 against published operational standards and for specific cancers is outlined below. The commissioner based summary shows the levels of activity and performance for cancer waiting times broken down by the local NHS organisation that commissions the patient care.

All cancer two week wait

- A patient should wait a maximum of two weeks to see a specialist after being urgently referred with suspected cancer by their GP. The operational standard specifies that 93% of patients should be seen within this time.
- In Quarter 4 2012-13, the performance reported within these commissioner-based statistics mirrors the provider-based figures, showing that 95.7% of patients were seen within 14 days following an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer. This compares to 95.8% in Quarter 3 2012-13.
- The proportion of patients seen within 14 days varies by Primary Care Trust (PCT) from 100.0% to 90.5%. All but five of 151 PCTs saw at least 93% of patients within 14 days. A graph showing the trend since the start of 2011-12 is displayed below:

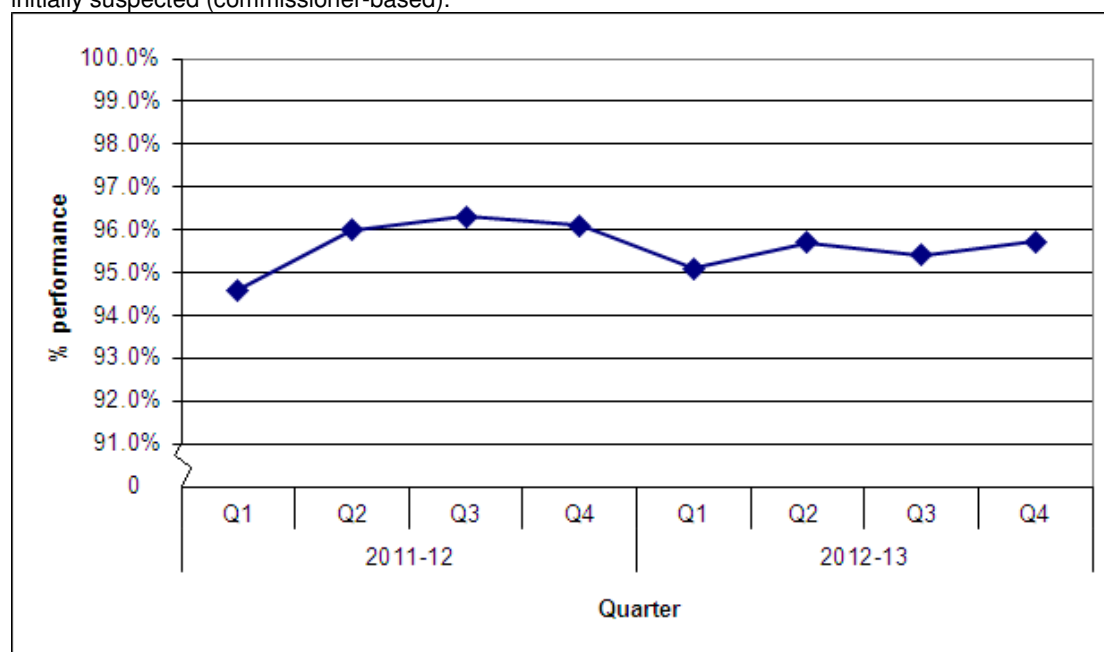
Figure 1: Proportion of cancer patients seen within 14 days of referral



Two week wait for symptomatic breast patients (cancer not initially suspected)

- Patients can expect to experience a maximum waiting time of two weeks to be seen by a specialist when referred urgently with breast symptoms, where cancer was not initially suspected. The operational standard for this requirement is 93%
- The percentage of people urgently referred for breast symptoms who were seen within two weeks of referral was 95.7% in the period January to March 2013.
- The proportion of patients seen within 14 days varied from 86.7% to 100.0% by PCT. 89.4% of PCTs met the operation standard of 93% of patients being seen within 14 days. A graph showing the trend since the start of 2011-12 is shown below:

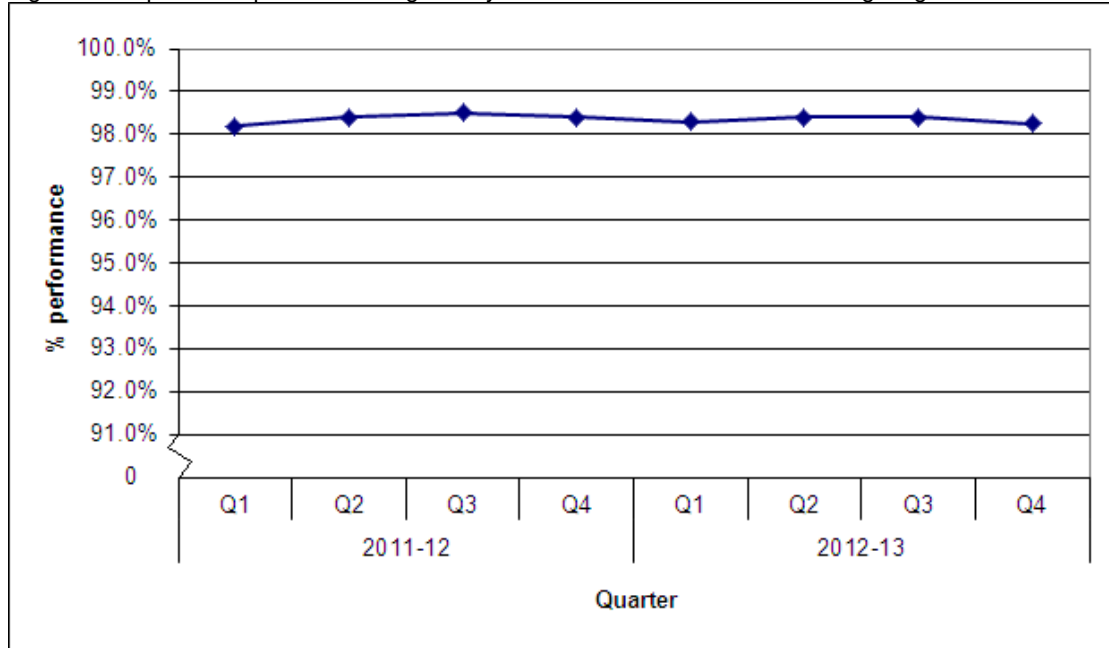
Figure 2: Proportion of patients seen within 14 days of referral for breast symptoms, where cancer is not initially suspected (commissioner-based).



One Month (31-day) diagnosis to first treatment wait

- The requirement is for a maximum waiting time of one month (31 days) between diagnosis and the start of first definitive treatment, for all cancers. This is measured from the point at which the patient is informed of a diagnosis of cancer and agrees their package of care. The operational standard for this measure is 96%.
- In Quarter 4 2012-13, the percentage of patients who began first treatment within 31 days of diagnosis, for all cancers was 98.3%. The corresponding figure for Quarter 3 2012-13 was 98.4%.
- The proportion of patients treated within 31 days of diagnosis varies from 95.3% to 100.0% by Primary Care Trust. All but two of 151 PCTs have met the operational standard of treating 96% of patients within 31 days of diagnosis. A graph showing the trend since the start of 2011-12 is shown below:

Figure 3: Proportion of patients waiting 31 days or less for first treatment following diagnosis



31-day wait for second or subsequent treatment

Anti-cancer drug treatments

- The requirement states that there should be a maximum wait of 31 days for a second or subsequent treatment. Where that treatment is an anti-cancer drug regimen, the operational standard is 98%.
- In Quarter 4 2012-13, 99.6% of patients receiving an anti-cancer drug regimen waited 31 days or less for that second or subsequent treatment. This is the same level of service provision as reported within the equivalent provider based statistics on waiting times for suspected and diagnosed cancer patients.
- The proportion of patients waiting for 31 days or less varies from 93.6% to 100.0% by PCT. All but eight PCTs treated at least 98% within 31 days.

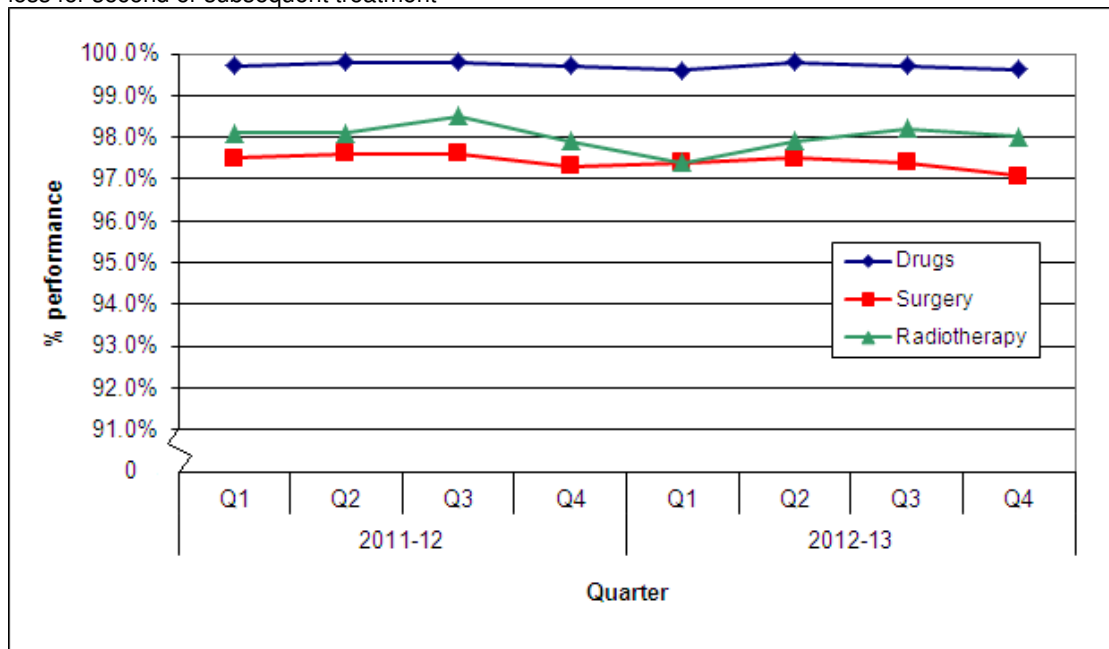
Surgery

- The commitment states that there should be a maximum wait of 31 days for a second or subsequent surgical treatment. The operational standard for this requirement is 94%.
- In Quarter 4 2012-13, 97.1% of patients waited 31 days or less for their second or subsequent treatment, compared to 97.4% in Quarter 3 2012-13.
- The proportion of patients waiting 31 days varies from 90.4% to 100.0% by PCT. Of the PCTs that data were collected for, 92.7% treated at least 94% of patients within 31 days.

Radiotherapy

- This requirement sets out that there should be a maximum wait of 31 days for a second or subsequent treatment if that treatment is a course of radiotherapy. The operational standard for this is 94%.
- In Quarter 4 2012-13, 98.0% of patients waited 31 days or less for the second or subsequent treatment. This is compared to 98.2% in Q3 2012-13.
- The proportion of patients waiting 31 days varies from 90.9% to 100.0% by PCT. All but four PCTs treated at least 94% of patients within 31 days.
- A graph showing the three subsequent cancer treatments at commissioner-based level since the start of 2011-12 is shown below:

Figure 4: Proportion of patients receiving drug regimen, surgery and radiotherapy waiting 31 days or less for second or subsequent treatment

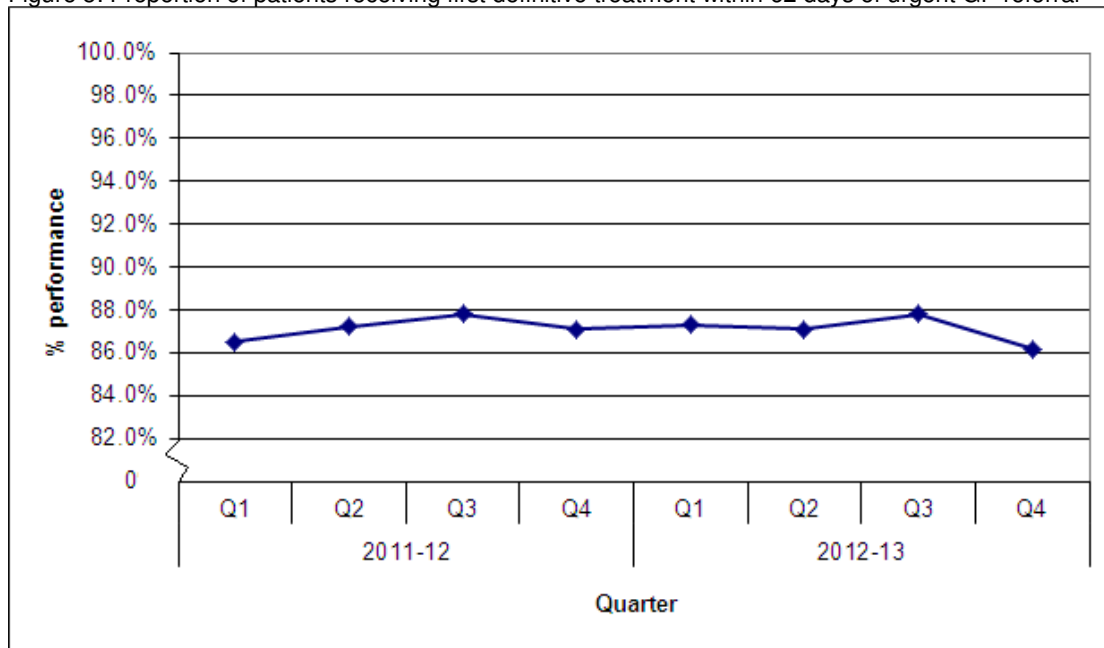


Two Month (62-day) urgent GP referral first treatment wait

- The operational standard for this measure specifies that 85% of patients should wait a maximum of 62 days to begin first definitive treatment following an urgent referral for suspected cancer from their GP.
- In Quarter 4 2012-13, 86.2% of patients who began first definitive treatment within 62 days of an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer. This is compared to 87.8% in Quarter 3 2012-13.
- The proportion of patients commencing their first definitive treatment within 62 days varies from 69.0% to 97.5% by commissioning PCT.

- 63.6% of PCTs treated at least 85% of patients within 62 days. A graph illustrating this trend since the start of 2011-12 is shown below:

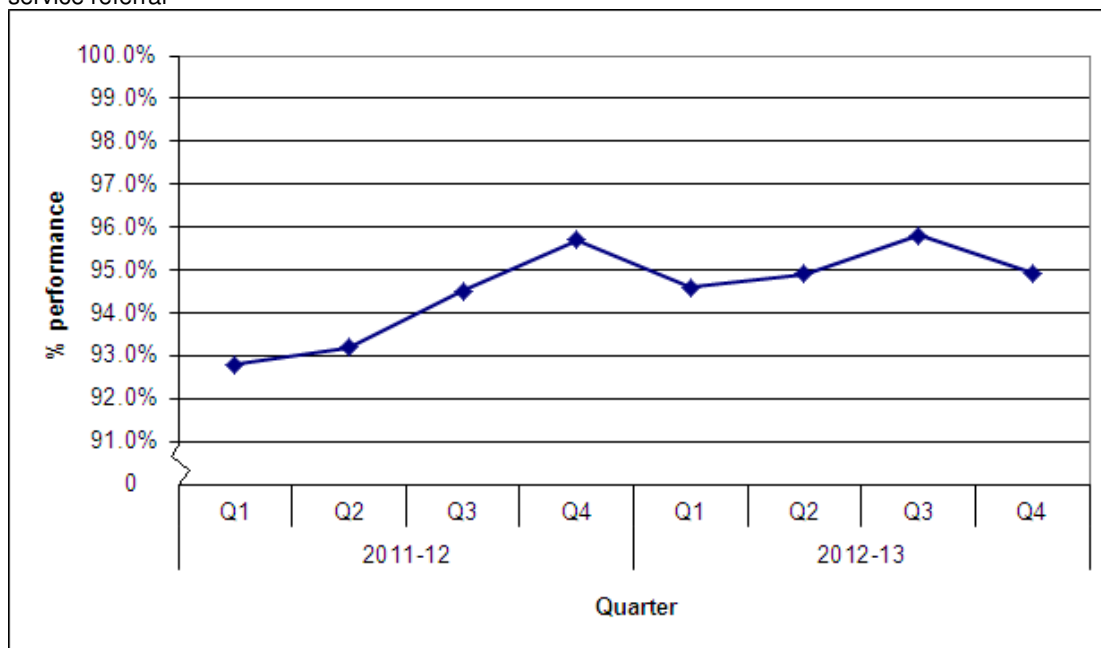
Figure 5: Proportion of patients receiving first definitive treatment within 62 days of urgent GP referral



62-day wait for first treatment following referral from an NHS cancer screening service: all cancers

- The operational standard states that 90% of patients would wait a maximum of 62 days to begin first definitive treatment following referral from an NHS cancer screening service.
- Between January to March 2013, 94.9% of people began first treatment for cancer within 62 days of referral from an NHS cancer screening service, for all cancers. This is compared to 95.8% in Quarter 3 2012-13.
- The proportion of patients waiting 62 days varies from 50.0% to 100.0% by PCT.
- In the case of 78.8% of PCTs, the proportion of patients receiving first definitive treatment within 62 days was at least 90%. A graph showing the trend over the 2011-12 financial year and into 2012-13 is displayed below:

Figure 6: Proportion of patients receiving first definitive treatment within 62 days of consultant screening service referral



62-day wait for first treatment following a consultant's decision to upgrade a patient's priority: all cancers

- In Quarter 4 2012-13, 3,893 people began first treatment following a consultant's decision to upgrade a patient's priority. 92.1% of these patients started treatment within 62 days of upgrade. This is compared to 92.8% in Quarter 3 2012-13.
- The proportion of patients waiting 62 days varies from 66.7% to 100.0% by PCT.
- An operational standard for the maximum waiting time of 62 days for first treatment for those patients who are upgraded with a suspicion of cancer by the consultant responsible for their care has not been developed. This is because not enough patients have benefited from the implementation of this service yet to provide enough data for a robust calculation of an operational standard.