



The needs of rural lung cancer patients: a patient perspective



Christine Stanford, North Coast Area Health Service, NSW
Christine.Stanford@ncahs.health.nsw.gov.au

Objective

The objective of this qualitative study is to explore the patient experience of lung cancer in the rural setting, and to determine the needs, both met and unmet, throughout the journey. Comparison of the findings with the evidence in the literature provides an evaluation of current service provision and identifies areas in which service provision could be improved.

Methods

A Health Information Exchange report using inpatient separation data under International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) codes was cross referenced with local records to provide a saturated sample of patients diagnosed with a primary lung cancer within the Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, and Nambucca Regions of the North Coast Area Health Service during the period 01/07/06 to 30/06/07. Eligibility was confirmed from medical records, data collected using a semi-structured interview format, and interview transcripts coded and analysed using a method of thematic content analysis.

Results

Lung cancer patients and their carers face an uncertain future and experience a high level of need including a timely pathway to diagnosis; honest and sensitive communication of diagnosis, treatment options and prognosis; provision of co-ordinated family-oriented, multidisciplinary care; and provision of support, both practical and emotional. There is evidence of an attitude to support which prevents patients from accessing support services that are widely available.

Conclusion and Implications

There is overall satisfaction with services and teams providing care locally, and in the preferred metropolitan centres. There is a need to improve access to treatment in the local area. The diagnostic process needs to be refined and access to multidisciplinary team planning and care coordination could be improved to ensure access for all patients. Further research is required into the reason for reluctance to access support services; the challenge of providing individualised information; and the challenge of providing realistic, but reasonably hopeful communication of diagnosis, treatment options, and prognosis for this group of patients.

For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'

Christine Stanford is a Clinical Nurse Consultant in Oncology/Haematology at the North Coast Cancer Institute, Coffs Harbour Health Campus.



www.ircst.health.nsw.gov.au