

AB005. SOH21AS100. Breast cancer detection rate and triage strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on cancer services worldwide. Access to screening services and outpatient appointments were significantly curtailed during the initial lockdown period. The Health Service Executive (HSE) and National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) introduced guidelines to triage symptomatic breast clinics in Ireland to prioritize the prompt diagnosis of new cancers and to reduce the number of patients attending clinics to limit the potential spread of COVID-19. This study aimed to assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on our symptomatic breast service.

Methods: This study compared clinic attendance numbers, triage category and new diagnoses of breast cancer over 5 months (March–July 2020) to the corresponding period in 2019 using NCCP records. Key performance indicators (KPIs) of urgent referrals were also assessed in this group.

Results: Comparing March–July 2020 to 2019, total clinic attendance decreased by 31.59% (n=4,372 vs. n=6,394) over the 4-month period. The largest monthly decline, 76.89%, was observed in April (n=210 vs. n=909). There was a small but insignificant decrease in the number of new breast cancer diagnoses (n=135 vs. n=141). Mean age of patients diagnosed with cancer was 61.5 years. The cancer diagnosis was mainly from urgent referral appointments 114 compared to 15 non-urgent. Patients triaged as urgent, seen

in the 10 days mandated by KPIs in March to July were well within the target compared to non-urgent (99% vs. 67%, 95% vs. 37%, 92% vs. 23% respectively).

Conclusions: This study demonstrates the impact on clinic attendance and how the UHG SBU adapted to the pandemic. Crisis management triage strategy filtered out actual cancer out of all referrals.

Keywords: COVID-19; symptomatic breast unit; breast cancer; triage strategy; key performance indicators

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Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: AL serves as an unpaid editorial board member of *Mesentery and Peritoneum*. The other authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethical Statement: The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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