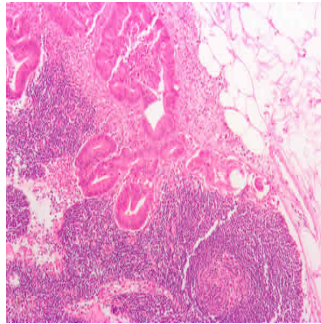

Wide Variation In Clinical Guidelines For Rectal Cancer



According to a new study by researchers at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center, clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of rectal cancer from five highly regarded organisations in the US, Europe and Canada all give different recommendations.

The guidelines from the five organisations have been published within the last six years. The researchers assessed these guidelines in terms of overall quality and give percentage scores based on six quality domains. They found a wide variety in quality, with average scores for the guidelines ranging from 27 to 90 percent.

The research team evaluated the guideline content comprehensively and looked at 21 common points of care. They found that the five guidelines agreed on only eight processes of care, and that six recommendations were in direct conflict with one another.

"In this day and age of practicing medicine, particularly with cancer, physicians rely on these guidelines heavily. Our study suggests we need to be careful about that. The guidelines are of varying quality and they have varying recommendations. It's not as easy as just viewing a guideline and following it," says senior study author Sandra L. Wong, MD, MS, Associate Professor of Surgery at the University of Michigan Medical School.

Wong and her colleagues previously published a study that found cancer guidelines did not meet the Institute of Medicine standards. In this new study, the research team found that in many instances, the guidelines cited the same published research but offered different recommendations.

Wong suggests that both physicians and patients should be aware of this variation in clinical guidelines and should not follow them blindly. She also emphasises that there is a need for organisations to state the guideline clearly when expert consensus or opinion enters into the recommendations for patient care.

Source: University of Michigan Health System

Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons

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