

WDHB Skin Service: GP Surgeon Scheme (GPSI), an effective model of care

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Aim: Waitematā District Health Board has implemented a new approach to the management of skin cancers by triaging lesions to specialist-trained general practitioners with the aim of reducing patient wait times and treatment costs. The primary outcome was to determine positive margin rates for general practitioners, with complication and infection rates as secondary outcomes.

Method: A retrospective audit was conducted on all excisions (n=2705) performed between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2016 by the 13 WDHB GPSI general practice surgeons. Electronic patient records were accessed to review histology reports, microbiology reports, and prescribing information. Each lesion was classified into benign/non-invasive and malignant categories and surgical margins analysed. Infection rates were determined via prescribing information.

Results: The general practice surgeons performed 2705 excisions, 1887 (69.8%) of which were malignant lesions. Amongst malignant lesions, a positive surgical margin was observed in 66 (3.5%) excisions and 165 cases (8.7%) had margins that were either positive or had less than 1.0mm of surrounding healthy tissue. There were 321 (11.9%) cases of infection in 2705 excisions.

Discussion: New Zealand papers from the last two decades estimate NMSC positive margin rate amongst primary care physicians to vary from 16 to 31%; recent papers have published rates ranging from 6.8 to 9.5%. Publications from Europe describe variable general practice surgeon performance, ranging from a 13.9% to 33.5% positive margin rate. These impressive key performance indicators used to assess quality of care for WDHB general practice surgeons validate their position as part of the multidisciplinary team dealing with skin cancer. The KPI's show WDHB general practice surgeons have significantly improved at NMSC excision compared to their previous colleagues, locally and internationally.

Conclusion: This study validates the use of general practice surgeons and shows their integral role in managing the enormous volume of skin cancer in New Zealand.