

PATTERNS OF CARE FOR BRACHYTHERAPY IN EUROPE, IN SPAIN AND ITALY: COMPARATIVE RESULTS

Ferran Guedea¹, Montse Ventura¹, Cristina Marchetti², Alfredo Polo¹, José López Torrecilla³, Pedro Bilbao⁴, and Josep Maria Borràs⁵

¹Department of Radiation Oncology, Catalan Institute of Oncology, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain; ²Medical Physics Department, Umberto I Hospital, Mestre, Italy; ³Department of Radiation Oncology, ERESA. Hospital General Universitario, Valencia, Spain; ⁴Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea, Spain; ⁵Catalan Institute of Oncology, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain

Aims and background: The aim of the study was to compare the facilities for brachytherapy in two similar countries, as are Italy and Spain. This survey reports the differences in the use of brachytherapy in these countries.

Methods: The data regarding brachytherapy was obtained in 2002 by means of a specially designed web site, because Internet allowed the access to the questionnaire in an easy and safe way. In the first edition of the survey, only the countries in which more than 50% of its centers had completed the questionnaire were included. Among these countries there were Italy and Spain.

Results: Data was available in 127 centers in Italy and 72 centers in Spain, where 35 and 39, respectively, provided brachytherapy. Although both countries had a similar number of radiotherapy patients and the average number of radiotherapy patients per center was similar in both countries ($P = 0.29$), there were

several differences related to brachytherapy. For instance, the mean number of radiation oncologists regularly performing brachytherapy per center was higher in Spain ($P = 0.001$). There were also differences in the average number of patients per center in the following tumor sites: breast ($P < 0.001$) and gynaecological ($P < 0.001$). In fact, the average number of patients per center who were treated with brachytherapy in these tumor sites was higher in Spain than Italy.

Conclusions: Although the estimated workload of the radiation oncologists, physicists and radiation technologists was higher in Spain, no statistically significant differences were found in the average number of patients per center for the following tumor sites: bronchus, head and neck, intracoronary, esophagus, prostate, rectum and skin. Several differences in the use of the brachytherapy procedures applied were also found.

Key words: brachytherapy, European Union, patterns of care.

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Correspondence to: Ferran Guedea, Department of Radiation Oncology, Institut Català d'Oncologia (ICO), University of Barcelona (UB), Gran via s/n, Km 2,7, 08907 L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain. Tel +34-93-2607722; fax +34-93-2607725; e-mail guedea@iconcologia.net

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