



# Clinical audits and standards of breast cancer care



# Learning objectives

After this lecture the student should be able to

- Demonstrates knowledge and critical reflections of how quality indicators allow standardised auditing and quality assurance.
- Participate in quality development processes and audit.
- Apply quality indicators related to breast cancer treatment and care in quality assurance and audit.



# Contents

- Aim and purpose of clinical audits
- Audit process and principles
- Benefits of clinical audits
- Case Finland – practical example of national clinical audits on adjuvant radiation therapy of the breast.



# Clinical audit

is a systematic, independent and structured examination or review of medical radiological procedures which seeks to improve the quality and the outcome of patient care (1).



# The aim of clinical audits is to

- Improve the quality of patient care
- Promote the effective use of resources
- Enhance the provision and organization of clinical services
- Promote professional education and training.



# Objectives of clinical audits are to

- Address the practical clinical work by different professionals
- Assess the local practice against the defined good practice
- Have professional initiation and foster an environment which enhances professional relationships and the multidisciplinary approach required to optimise patient care



# Clinical audits

- *Internal*: auditor from the same health care unit.
- *External*: Independent auditor from other health care unit, auditing company or clinical audit group.
- Clinical audits should be carried out by *multidisciplinary* and multiprofessional auditing group having highest expertise in their audit area.
- Should follow *clear practices* and *evidence-based criteria* during the whole auditing process (2)



# Clinical audits

- Health care practices and results should be *examined against agreed standards*.
- Be a systematic and continuing activity.
- Follow general accepted rules and standards.
- Aim at evaluating the current status of the health care unit with respect to its services and to identify areas for future improvement.





# Standards of good practice

- Evidence-based!
- Based on legal requirements, results of research, guidelines or quality indicators by learned societies, consensus statements or local agreement
- Both generic and specific criteria
- Practical measures of performance
- To be updated regularly



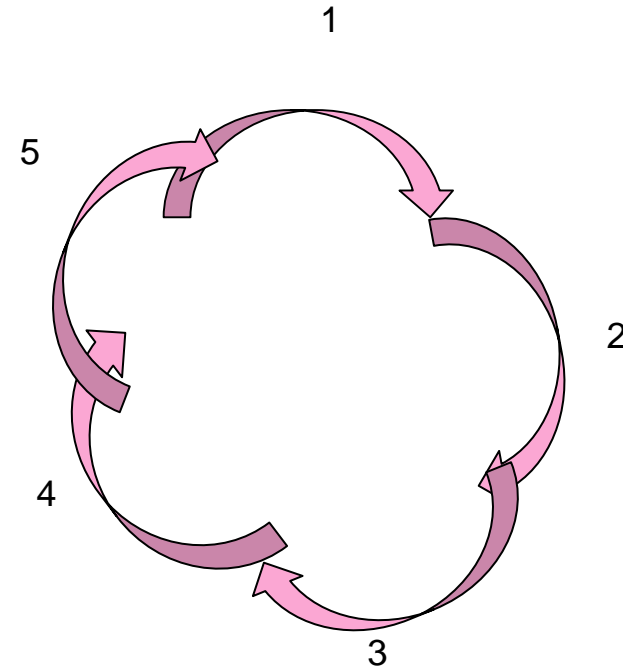
# Auditors

- Professional competence and long-term clinical experience
- Need to be involved in clinical work at a speciality approximately similar to the one to be audited
- The auditors should receive specific training on the general audit procedure and techniques, as well as the agreed audit programme and the criteria of good practices to be applied.



# The process

1. Select the standard
2. Assess local practice
3. Compare with standard
4. Implement change
5. Re-audit





# Audit process

Audit request by  
admin unit

## Preparation

- Objectives
- Team
- Method
- Data + documentation
- Communication to all

## On site auditing

- Familiarising with the target unit
- General guidance of auditors
- Clarifying objectives to all
- Data collection

## Analysing and reporting

- Comparison against standards ++,+-,—
- Auditor recommendations



# Frequency of audits

- *Self assessments:* Annually
- *Internal:* continuous activity covering significant parts of the program once a year
- *External:* min time interval five years (2)

In national recommendations there may be deviating recommendations according to medical exposure type.



# Benefits of clinical audits

- Uniform good quality protocols for examinations and therapies
- Uniform national/international criteria help to compare performance in different radiology and radiotherapy units...
- Feedback tool for the staff of their performance.
- Point out need for corrective actions.
- Works as powerful educational tool.



# Audit works as powerful educational tool

The audit team learns about:

- multiprofessional assessment practices, audit process itself, different kinds of practices in other organisations, ways of organising services...

The site to be audited e.g:

- also learn about audit process and practices,
- learn how to improve the unit and individual performance,
- staff gets positive feedback and encouragement,
- give tools to implement corrective actions quickly,
- supports staff in their learning and development (3)



# Case Finland

Clinical audits on adjuvant radiation therapy of the breast





# National clinical audits on adjuvant radiation therapy of the breast

Finnish advisory committee for clinical audits (KLIARY) set:

- topics to be audited,
- best practice criteria against which the clinical practice was assessed
- and questions by which the fulfillment of the criteria could be assessed (4)



# Topics to be assessed

- Decision for radiation therapy and how referrals were dealt with
- Indications of breast radiation therapy in different malignancies
- Preparatory procedures before radiation therapy
- Prescribing radiation therapy
- Dose planning
- Execution of radiation therapy
- Radiation therapy process
- Follow up (4)



# Best practice criteria

- Best practice criteria were based on recent high quality research studies and/or guidelines and valid legislation
- E.g. Topic Preparatory procedures before radiation therapy; subtopic: Dose planning examinations
- Best practice criterium was based on The Act of the medical use of radiation 1044/2018 (5)



# Best practice criteria

Topic: Preparatory procedures before radiation therapy; subtopic: Dose planning examinations

Criterion: Breast dose planning CT must have imaging protocol accepted by physician.

Measures of the level of performance:

- Imaging time must be slow enough for free-breathing imaging and short enough for breath-hold imaging.
- Slice thickness must be thin enough ( $\leq 3\text{mm}$ , Image quality DRR). Image quality must be good enough in order to define vein structures, sentinel nodes and healthy tissue. Imaging dose must be identifiable and optimised. (4)



# Questions to assess the fulfilment of quality criteria

Topic: Preparatory procedures before radiation therapy; subtopic: Dose planning examinations

- What kinds of imaging protocols were created for dose planning CT?
- What kinds of things were addressed and taken into account on these protocols?
- What was the slice thickness on dose planning CT?
- Has the maximum dose limit been set for dose planning CT? (4)



# Audit report contents

- Objectives of the audit
- A brief description of audit activities
- Description of the facility
- Findings and results of the audit
- Benchmarking if appropriate
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Annexes. (2)



# After the audit

- Auditor report and recommendations are given to improve the practice
- No sanctions
- Improvements checked out at the next audit rounds

**Clinical audit is an effective tool for developing practices! (6)**



Thank you for your  
attention!







# References

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