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BACKGROUND

The NSW Oncology Group has identified structured pathology as a high priority for improving clinical decision support. Unlike the UK and USA, there is no national process for development and dissemination of structured (or synoptic) pathology reporting standards for cancer in Australia.

There is limited evidence or research to demonstrate that structured pathology reports are beneficial to clinical treatment, clinical decision making or reduced workload. However, clinicians agree that it is good practice to have guidelines, standard report formats and minimum data items. One Australian audit demonstrated that synoptic reports offer more clinical decision support information than narrative. A Consensus Statement was issued by the National Round Table on Structured Pathology Reporting for Cancer in June 2007 in Sydney.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT

Structured reporting of cancer cases in anatomical pathology and haematology is likely to contribute to better cancer control through improvements in:

- Clinical management and treatment planning
- Cancer notification, registration and aggregated analyses
- Research

The plan described above in principle should be the approach building on currently available knowledge and ensuring clinical engagement.

This plan should be resourced and undertaken without delay.

Workload implication needs to be further explored.

INITIATIVE

The Round Table will:

1. Establish sound governance for national structured pathology reporting standards.
2. Develop a "toolkit" for developing structured pathology reporting standards and guidelines
3. Develop or identify reporting templates and guidelines for at least breast, colorectal, melanoma, lung, prostate cancers, and lymphoma.
4. Establish a framework for ongoing revision.

OPERATION

1. Clinical advisory groups review existing reporting standards, and sign off on national standards for each cancer.
2. Standard reports and guidelines are published
3. Recommendation to NPAAC (National Pathologists Accreditation Advisory Council) that structured reporting become a standard for laboratory accreditation
4. NPAAC incorporates structured reporting into laboratory accreditation

EVALUATION

The program will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. The establishment and publication of national standard reports for at least five cancers;
2. The adoption of these standards by the majority of academic and commercial pathology services, including regional services
3. The incorporation of the standards into laboratory accreditation;
4. The incorporation of the standards into NSW cancer service accreditation;
5. Integration of structured cancer reporting into laboratory systems and registries.



Figure 1: Implementation Flowchart