



PRESS RELEASE

Embargo: 00:01hrs, Thursday 23 February 2006

21 February 2006

Royal College of Radiologists publishes latest audit on radiotherapy waiting times

Over half of all patients receiving curative radiotherapy wait longer than the recommended maximum of 4 weeks from the date of decision to treat. These are the findings of the Royal College of Radiologists' 2005 survey of radiotherapy waiting times in the United Kingdom, published today, Thursday 23 February, on its website at <http://www.rcr.ac.uk/docs/general/pdf/RTWT2005report.pdf>

These UK wide audits have been previously conducted in 1997 and 2003; this latest audit shows some improvement on the results published from the audit in 2003, but current waiting times remain substantially worse than those originally documented in 1997.

Dr Michael Williams, Registrar of the College's Faculty of Clinical Oncology, and the lead on the audit, said, "This audit shows that over half of all patients receiving curative radiotherapy wait longer than the recommended maximum of 4 weeks from the date of decision to treat. The wait varies substantially across the country: some centres treat all patients within target; others do not achieve this for any of their patients. The College believes that prompt treatment is essential for all patients as there is good evidence that delay allows tumours to grow, which may worsen outcomes.

"In England, the Department of Health's waiting time targets only apply to a small subset of 15% of patients, for whom radiotherapy is the first cancer treatment. The RCR is pleased to be represented on the Department of Health's Radiotherapy Advisory Group, which is working to address these issues and to devise a comprehensive plan for radiotherapy services over the next decade.

"We also welcome the news that the Scottish Ministers of Health accepted, and had published on 1 February 2006, "Radiotherapy Activity Planning for Scotland 2011-2015", one recommendation of which was the establishment of a Scottish National Radiotherapy Advisory Group which will ensure implementation of that report".

Notes to Editors

1. For further information from the Royal College of Radiologists, please contact the College's Communications Officer, Dan Garbutt, on 020 7299 1138, or dan_garbutt@rcr.ac.uk
2. The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) has approximately 7,000 members and Fellows worldwide representing the disciplines of clinical oncology and clinical radiology. All members and Fellows of the College are registered medical or dental practitioners.
3. The role of the College is to advance the science and practice of clinical radiology and clinical oncology, further public education and promote study and research through setting professional standards of practice.