

Rapid Diagnostic and Assessment Centres

There are Rapid Diagnostic Centres in several different areas of England, meant to offer diagnostic testing in a single location. The centres are specifically designed to improve the waiting times for patients who are suspected to have cancer, even if their symptoms are vague at first. With the trial of these diagnosis centres within specific NHS hospitals, GPs now have the ability to refer patients so that a definitive diagnosis can be made within as little as one day. While some patients will need to have further testing completed, early diagnosis is on the horizon for many individuals throughout the UK.

The diagnostic centres are only in trial stage currently, but they follow the path of some successful shops in nearby countries. The NHS has been ravished with growing waiting times in years past, especially for those who are in need of a cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment. The addition of the centres allows these waiting times to be reduced across the board, whilst also eliminating the worry and frustration of patients with or without cancer. For those with thyroid cancer, the new piloted programme is a breath of fresh air throughout the healthcare system.

Impacts on thyroid cancer diagnosis

Within the UK, thyroid cancer is of growing concern for many adults. Each year, there are an estimated 3,400 new thyroid cancer cases diagnosed, and the disease is now the 20th most common cancer in the UK. Throughout the US, nearly 54,000 new cases of thyroid cancer and an associated 2,060 deaths are estimated for 2018. And three out of four cases are women. It starts when cells in the thyroid gland grow out of control and take over normal cells, creating a lump in the neck that can cause pain and difficulties swallowing and breathing. Over the last several years, the disease has been increasing in severity and prevalence, making it necessary to shed light on methods to diagnose it quickly and accurately.

When thyroid cancer is found early on in its progression, patients have a higher probability of receiving treatment that works to eliminate cancerous cells before they spread too far into the body. Most early thyroid cancer diagnosis starts with patients noticing a lump or cluster of lumps on or near the neck. Swelling that is unexplained, trouble swallowing, and tenderness on the neck may all be signs of thyroid cancer. However, there is no recommended screening test to find thyroid cancer in its early stages.

This makes the one-stop diagnostic centres crucial in early diagnosis. As soon as a medical provider recognises potential signs and symptoms of thyroid cancer, even if they are vague at first, a patient can begin comprehensive testing to receive a proper diagnosis early in the cancer's onset. If cancer is not the culprit, patients are given some peace of mind far faster than traditional healthcare systems have to offer.

Avoiding overdiagnosis

Although thyroid cancer is prevalent throughout the world, a lump in the neck does not

automatically mean an individual has the disease, nor does it mean they need immediate treatment. A group of medical negligence specialists share that a recent report highlights the concerns relating to thyroid cancer screenings. As more technological tools became available to the medical community, more individuals were being handed a cancer diagnosis that was not accurate. It is estimated that today, there are thousands of cases of thyroid cancer that could be another medical condition altogether - one that does not require invasive surgery to remove or intense prescription medication regimens to undergo. While the new diagnostic centres in the UK offer some promise in getting individuals the diagnosis, or all clear that they need to make informed medical decisions, the risk of continuing overdiagnosis of thyroid cancer is real.

Leading organisations bringing awareness to thyroid health and cancer for UK residents, provides some guidance to those who may believe thyroid cancer diagnosis is in their future. First and foremost, not all lumps found on or near the throat mean cancerous growth, but the only way to know for sure is to receive further screening, potentially through one of the new diagnostic centres throughout the NHS. When a lump does turn out to be cancerous, it is often not as challenging to treat as one might presume. So long as the cancerous growth is treated quickly and controlled over time, patients are likely to make a full recovery.

The trialled one-stop-shops throughout the ten hospital locations in England offer a great deal of hope for those who deserve a timely diagnosis and course of treatment for cancer, as well as those who do not have cancer but have unexplained symptoms. However, it is crucial for individuals to recognise the equally important task of considering the consequences of misdiagnosis, particularly for prevalent diseases like thyroid cancer. Before undergoing any surgery for a cancer diagnosis, patients should have a deep understanding of their condition so that an informed decision can be made.

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