

ABSTRACT NO. R23

ASSESSMENT OF THE ADEQUACY OF SURGICAL RESECTION FOR RECTAL CANCER

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PURPOSE: The Colorectal Cancer Care Collaborative is a 28 facility working group, tasked to evaluate the current status of Colorectal Cancer Treatment within the VA. Multiple stakeholders review colorectal cancer care locally and report nationally via a custom designed data acquisition tool. Twenty-four Colorectal Cancer Quality Indicators are used to determine the adequacy of cancer treatment at each facility. This study was undertaken to assess the appropriateness of en-bloc surgical resections for rectal cancer, to determine how surgeons from eight VA facilities documented the adequacy and quality of surgical resection for rectal cancer and to develop more specific quality indicators.

METHODS: Eighty de-identified operative reports of complete rectal resections (APR or LAR) were reviewed by a panel of ten surgeons following instructions for specific review of the operations. Specific attention was directed to the performance of a total mesorectal excision (TME) if this was indicated.

RESULTS: Seventy operative reports were available for final analysis, 16 for APR and 54 for LAR. Only 7 reports (10%) indicated that a TME was performed in the title of the operation (e.g. LAR with TME). 29 reports (40%) had a description or some words within the narrative of the operation that indicated that a TME was likely performed. In the majority of the operative reports it was difficult to determine the adequacy of resection or the specific management of the mesorectum and/or circumferential margins of resection.

CONCLUSIONS: This study determined that current dictation practices make it difficult for data abstractors to correctly assess the adequacy of resection for rectal cancer. It is unclear if surgeons within the VA are performing adequate surgical resections for rectal cancer. New guidelines for the collaborative's review of rectal cancer resection were developed. Additionally, a standardized operative report template or checklist is being developed for surgeons both as a documentation and education tool.