

Cancer patients failed by latest breach of '62 day wait' target

November 20 2014



Experts say that cancer patients are being failed as new figures show waiting time targets for treatment have been missed for the third consecutive quarter.

The figures show that between July and September this year more than five thousand [cancer patients](#) have waited more than 62 days for treatment.

The '62-day-wait' target was introduced to set a cap on the time between GP referral and the start of treatment for [cancer](#) patients.

The target in England is for 85 per cent of patients to start their treatment within 62 days of their urgent referral.

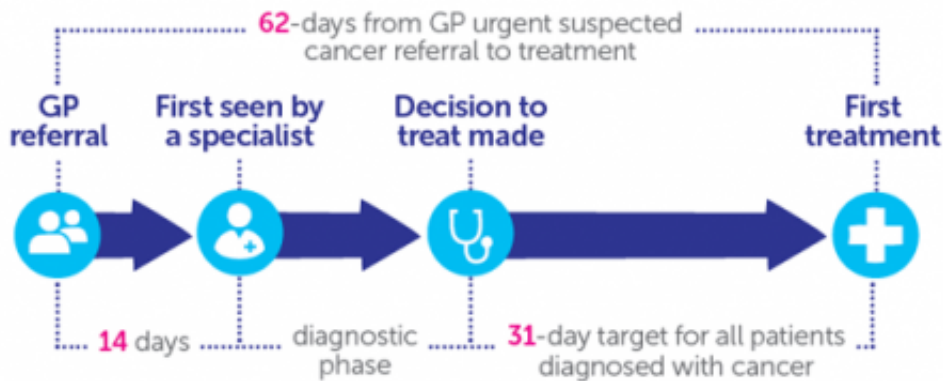
But today's figures from NHS England show that for the last quarter only 83.5 per cent of patients began treatment within this window. This follows a worrying downward trend from 84.4 per cent and 84.1 per cent in the previous two quarters.

Since the third quarter of last year (October – December 2013) there has been a 2.3 per cent fall in patients being treated within the two month target.

Sarah Woolnough, Cancer Research UK's executive director of policy and information, said: "This isn't just about missed targets – consecutive breaches mean thousands of patients are being failed."

The 62-day wait target was introduced in September, 2000, as part of the NHS Cancer Plan. Starting treatment quickly means there is less time for the cancer to progress, and treatments given earlier are more likely to be effective.

But only 43 per cent of all NHS Trusts are meeting the 85 per cent target at the moment. And four in 10 of [patients](#) who miss the target have to wait more than a month before they begin their treatment.



"Today's figures show that more than a third of all NHS trusts in England have breached the '62 day target'. These targets exist to ensure swift diagnosis of cancer and access to [treatment](#), which is vital if we're serious about having the best survival rates in the world," added Woolnough.

"Patients want confidence that suspected cancer is taken seriously and prioritised by the NHS. These breaches have become a trend and they are worsening, which is why urgent action must be taken to support the NHS."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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