

How care pathways contribute to improving oncological care

October 28 2020, by M.m.j. Van Hillegersberg-Hofmans



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Care pathways for cancer patients play an important role in improving the quality of care and the outcomes of this care. This is the conclusion of Jolanda van Hoeve in her doctoral thesis that she will defend at the University of Twente on 29 October. However, the development and implementation of care pathways cannot be seen in isolation from other developments. "In fact: a care pathway should be based on current

national guidelines and professional standards."

For her doctoral thesis, Jolanda van Hoeve examined whether the above-mentioned goals are achieved for oncology through the use of care pathways. She focussed on the quality of care, the added value for healthcare professionals and patients, and the suitability of using care pathways in oncology networks. Her [doctoral thesis](#) consists of several literature studies and practice-based studies on the added value of care pathways for patients with breast cancer and patients with esophageal and stomach cancer.

This thesis reveals the effects of care pathways for patients. For example, more patients can receive the [diagnostic tests](#) as stated in the recommendations of the guideline, and the length of time patients can start treatment after their diagnosis is shortened. The thesis not only unveils the effects of care pathways for patients, but also for healthcare professionals for whom the process of developing and implementing a care [pathway](#) contributes to a good working environment with personal contact between colleagues in an oncology network. Furthermore, the significance of an effective and targeted development of care pathways is also emphasized. However, the development and implementation of care pathways cannot be seen in isolation from other developments.

Jolanda van Hoeve says: "In fact: a care pathway should be based on current national guidelines and [professional standards](#), which is why the outcomes of my study cannot always be attributed only to the care pathway. But care pathways do clearly contribute to improving the quality of care; by making clear agreements on the transfer of information, for instance. This results in fewer misunderstandings and less annoyance, which is very important for working together in a pleasant environment."

About care pathways

Caring for [cancer patients](#) is multidisciplinary and complex in nature. It calls for close collaboration between knowledgeable and experienced [healthcare professionals](#) who base their decisions on recent scientific insights. Care pathways are often used to adequately implement and coordinate the care for specific groups of patients and are based on guidelines, good practices and patient expectations. Care pathways are mainly intended to improve the multidisciplinary [quality of care](#), reduce clinical variation, increase patient satisfaction and improve the use of available resources.

More information: The added value of oncological care pathways; Data supported with health care professionals' and patients' perspective: books.ipskampprinting.nl/thesis/548649-middelkoop/

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