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Quality Assurance Team for Radiation Oncology (QUATRO): The National Center for Cancer Care & Research (NCCCR) experience

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Introduction: In 2009, the National Center for Cancer Care & Research (NCCCR)-Qatar underwent major upgrade of its facility and manpower. This upgrade included the commissioning of new equipment, the implementation of new techniques and modalities as well as recruiting new staff. In order to ensure that the quality of care provided meets international standards it was essential to solicit an independent external auditor. Due to the lack of national quality audit system in Qatar it has been decided that all the activities of the radiation oncology department will be audited by the group QUATRO.

Purpose: This work describes our QUATRO experience as part of a comprehensive external audit of our radiation therapy facility.

Materials & Methods: A detailed description of the tasks performed during both the preparation and execution phases is described. A team was first formed including leaders, technicians and administrative staff and a work plan that includes specific goals has been established.

The first task was to familiarize our department with this type of audit and thus ensure a smooth running of the visit of the QUATRO group. This was done during one month prior to their visit through the study and the analysis of some documents sent by the group and through the completion of a questionnaire containing information about our department including the techniques used for treatment, patient information and staff specification and their qualifications.

After this preparation step, the five-day visit of the team was organized and the main program of the visit was outlined. The visit started with a presentation addressed to the QUATRO group in which the history of our department, information about patients, treatment techniques and personnel was detailed. A presentation was then given by the QUATRO group underlying the goals of the audit procedure. In addition to observing the procedures applied in our department, a validation of our measurements was carried out by comparing them with those conducted by the group using their own equipment. At the end of this visit, a document was drafted by the group listing the outcome of the audit including the points on which improvements are recommended.

Results: Although the QUATRO team stressed the fact that our department is capable to provide radiation therapy of very advanced technology and in consequence complies with the criteria of the IAEA for a center of competence, the auditing report of QUATRO group highlighted few areas of improvement. Since then, some of these recommendations have been implemented. The structure of Multi-discipline Teams (MDTs) has been reorganized and expanded. The site specific relevant MDTs are now attended by radiation oncologists to support patient accrual. In addition, further guidelines have been developed for target and Organs At Risk (OAR) definition and this process is now peer-reviewed. ICD codes have also been implemented.

Discussion: The importance of this work lies in the fact that this is the first quality control audit in our department, carried out by an approved external organization. The classification of our department by the audit team as a center of competence for the next 5 years enabled us to validate the procedures practiced in our department and thus to strengthen our confidence level.

Country

Qatar

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