

Pediatric tumor boards in Europe: Current situation and results of an international survey in ExPO-r-NeT

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• Background

Multidisciplinary care is the hallmark of high quality cancer management. Individual opinions have been displaced by collective decisions in the approach of pediatric cancer. Under the ExPO-r-NeT project (European Expert Paediatric Oncology Reference Network for Diagnostics and Treatment), the actual picture of multidisciplinary pediatric tumor boards in Europe has been studied in depth.

• Methods

A 20 question survey regarding several features of tumor board practice was designed. Data collected included infrastructure, organization and clinical decision-making information from the centres. The survey was distributed to the National Paediatric Haematology and Oncology Societies (NaPHOS), that forwarded the survey to the sites. For comparative analysis, respondents were grouped into four geographical regions: Northern, Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. Statistical significance among regions was assessed by multinomial logistic regression and $p < 0.05$ was considered as statistically significant.

• Results

The questionnaire was distributed amongst 30 countries. Response was obtained from 23 NaPHOS (77%) that altogether have 212 pediatric oncology treating centres. A total of 121 institutions answered (57%). Ninety-one percent of the centres hold multidisciplinary boards, however international second consultations are performed in 36% and only 15% participate on virtual tumor boards. Videoconferencing facilities and standard operational procedures (SOPs) are available in 49% and 43% of the centres respectively. There were statistically significant differences between European regions concerning meeting infrastructure and organization/logistics: specific room, projecting equipment, access to medical records and PACS (Picture Archiving and Communication System) videoconferencing facilities and existence of SOPs.

• Conclusion

Pediatric tumor boards are a common feature in Europe. In order to reduce inequalities and have equal access to healthcare a virtual network is needed. Important differences on the functioning and the access to IT technology between regions in Europe have been observed and need to be addressed.