Improving outcomes through quality certification of breast units

Alberto Costa MD

Director, European School of Oncology

On behalf of the European CanCer Organisation (ECCO)
QUALITY CERTIFICATION IS AN ACTIVE PROCESS

- A breast unit which is willing to achieve a quality certification is also confident in the quality of its work.

- Quality certification means:
  1. transparency
  2. accurate recording of all procedures
  3. agreed protocols and modalities of care
  4. team spirit and collaborative attitudes
  5. belief in multidisciplinarity and multiprofessionality
QUALITY CERTIFICATION MEANS BEING OPEN TO CHANGE

- The quality certification process implies an acceptance of the fact that things may need to change.

- The old approach «we have always done it this way» is not compatible with the quality certification process.

- Protocols describing the different procedures are written on the basis of consensus within the unit and with the full awareness that they need to be revised periodically and possibly changed.

- Change can also be necessary in the leadership of the unit (rotating directorship) and in the composition of the Core Team.
QUALITY CERTIFICATION AS CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE UNIT’S WORK

- The Multi Disciplinary Meeting (MDM) is the core centre of the activity of the unit: by definition a critical analysis of process of care

- Quality indicators are the main tools to support the quality control process. It is essential that the key quality indicators are simple, easily controllable and not ambiguous

- A constant, constructive critical attitude is the essential component of quality assurance

- External evaluations (peer review site visits and patients outcome evaluations) are indispensable
QUALITY CERTIFICATION IMPROVES PATIENTS OUTCOMES

- Preoperative and postoperative MDMs reduce dramatically the risk of error because several different professionals focus their attention on the same clinical case and the patient can benefit from a variety of competences and experiences.

- Data recording and data management force the health professionals to be careful in what they are doing and how they do it.

- The minimum requirements (50 procedures for the surgeons, 1’000 mammographies for the radiologists, etc) ensure competence.

- The quality indicators make nearly impossible to persevere in wrong attitudes and procedures.