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Significance of anemia in colorectal cancers diagnoses through the two weeks wait lower GI cancer referral pathway

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Introduction: Colorectal cancers (CRC) are diagnosed through the two-week-wait lower GI cancer referral pathway. Anemia can be a sign of occult GI bleeding and may indicate sinister pathology.

Aim: To identify the incidence and type of anemia, common presenting symptoms in patients diagnosed with CRC through two-week-wait referrals.

Methods: A retrospective analysis of a cohort of patients diagnosed with CRC over a 12-month period at a single unit.

Results: 90 patients (Male=52/Female=38) with a median age of 75, were included in the analysis. The majority were referred with a change in bowel habit (46%) with anemia a close second (30%). However, a total of 51 patients (57%) were found to be anemic at presentation. Only 45% of anemic patients had a microcytic anemia. Only 8 (16%) had a documented low ferritin. Right sided cancers had significantly lower hemoglobin levels (Median=98g/dl) compared to left sided lesions (129g/dl), U=346.0, p<0.01

Conclusion: Anemia remains a frequent finding in patients diagnosed with CRC through two-week-wait lower GI referrals. Right sided CRC more likely to present with anemia than left sided lesions and do not always show a microcytic picture. More research is needed to look at significance of non-iron deficiency anemia in CRC.

Recent Publications

1. Zafar A, Mak T, Whinnie S and Chapman M A (2012) The 2-week wait referral system does not improve 5-year colorectal cancer survival. *Colorectal Disease* 14(4): e177-e180.
2. Rai S and Kelly M J (2007) Prioritization of colorectal referrals: a review of the 2-week wait referral system. *Colorectal Disease* 9(3):195-202.
3. Leung E, Grainger J, Bandla N and Wong L (2010) The effectiveness of the '2-week wait' referral service for colorectal cancer. *International Journal of Clinical Practice* 64(12): 1671-1674.
4. Aljarabah M, Borley N, Goodman A and Wheeler J (2009) Referral letters for 2-week wait suspected colorectal cancer do not allow a "straight-to-test" pathway. *Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons of England* 91(2):106-109.
5. Chohan, D P, Goodwin K, Wilkinson S, Miller R and Hall N R (2005) How has the 'two-week wait' rule affected the presentation of colorectal cancer? *Colorectal Disease* 7(5):450-453.

Biography

He is a final year medical student who thoroughly enjoys interacting with people. My strong academic record has given me the opportunity to be successful at medical school. My interest in research has led to presenting at various conferences, both nationally and internationally in the form of posters and presentations. My enthusiasm for working with people and my excellent interpersonal skills led to acting as student ambassador for the university. I am the clinical representative for the surgical society of the university. I mentor A level students and prospective medical students for both entrance exams and interviews..

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