

LENTIL – a mixed method study to define quality criteria in pediatric oncology for Switzerland

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Abstract

Introduction Quality criteria can indicate the quality of care provided in pediatric oncology centers. Certification can reflect adherence to quality criteria and officially attest standardized and high-quality care. Quality criteria and certification exist in several countries worldwide. In Switzerland, pediatric oncology centers are required to fulfill quality criteria related to the conduct of clinical trials. However, there is a lack of quality criteria that reflect the quality of care provided in treatment centers.

Aim The LENTIL project aimed to 1) summarize the current literature on quality criteria for pediatric oncology centers worldwide, 2) conduct a survey among experts about quality criteria and certification possibilities for pediatric oncology in their countries, and 3) define a list of quality criteria relevant for pediatric oncology centers in Switzerland based on international evidence.

Methods A three-step approach was applied, consisting of 1) a systematic literature review, 2) an international cross-sectional expert survey, and 3) a survey-based modified Delphi online process with stakeholders from Switzerland. Steps one and two exclusively focused on countries with highly developed healthcare systems.

Results The availability and application of quality criteria and certification for pediatric oncology differed among the participating countries. These countries more often established

quality criteria than certifications. From the literature and the survey, 95 quality criteria were identified in six categories: facilities, multidisciplinary team and other experts, supportive care, treatment, long-term care, and volume and numbers. Within the Delphi process, stakeholders rated 62 quality criteria relevant for Swiss pediatric oncology centers.

Conclusion In conclusion, the findings of this project can serve as a reference for stakeholders and inform an international harmonization of quality criteria and certification for pediatric oncology centers. The final list of quality criteria, agreed upon by Swiss stakeholders, can be applied in Switzerland to assess the quality of care provided by pediatric oncology centers. For a successful implementation, clear thresholds and a monitoring infrastructure need to be established. Further studies and expert dialogues may be beneficial in this regard.