



ROYAL
COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS
OF IRELAND

National Histopathology Quality Improvement (NHQI) Programme

[Key Words and Phrases to Help You
Understand Report Findings](#)

National Specialty Quality Improvement Programmes

Key Words and Phrases

What is the National Histopathology Quality Improvement (NHQI) Programme?

This programme was set-up in 2009 by the HSE and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI). This was in response to a number of cancer misdiagnosis cases which highlighted a lack of systems in place to help discover and learn from these cases. The aim of the programme was to set national standards in histopathology which could be used to drive quality improvements in laboratories.

What is histopathology?

Pathology is the study of disease. Histopathology is the area of pathology in which tissue and cell samples are examined by a histopathologist to diagnose disease. Histopathology is focused on diagnosing cancer and other diseases that occur in the body.

Histopathologist

A histopathologist is a doctor, who has specialised their medical training in the area of histopathology.

A histopathologist will study a sample of tissue taken from a patient during a biopsy procedure using a microscope. With the help of the medical laboratory scientist team, they will be able to diagnose a disease which is key to allowing other doctors to make a treatment plan for a patient.

Each year, the NHQI Programme present findings from information that is collected and analysed for the previous year. These results are broken down into groups to make it easier to understand the report. Two such groups are histology and cytology.

Histology

Histology refers to the review of a block of tissue which will contain many different types of cells. In this report histology samples are from small biopsies, GI endoscopic biopsies, cancer resections and other non-biopsy samples.

Cytology

Cytology generally refers to the review of individual cells or a cluster of cells. In this report, this refers only to non-gynaecological samples.

The report also looks at hospital laboratories in two groupings: general and cancer centres.

Cancer Centre (CC)

There are eight cancer centres of excellence in Ireland; they are referred to as cancer centres in the report.

General Centre (GC)

This term refers to non-cancer centres and encompasses public, voluntary, and private hospitals that participate in the NHQI Programme.

Key Quality Indicator (KQI)

For the NHQI Programme, this is a standard used to measure the quality of patient care in relation to specific parts of the process used in the laboratory to arrive at a diagnosis for a patient.

Target

The NHQI Programme has created a specific value connected to each key quality indicator. These targets guide laboratories towards best practice and care for the patient and are values that laboratories should aim for or try to exceed.

Recommendation

Each year, the NHQI Programme reviews all the findings in the annual national data report and suggests the best course of action that should be taken by laboratories and / or the hospital management to make sure that targets are being met and patients are receiving the best care.