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**Accuracy of a regional colorectal cancer database: implications for the National Bowel Cancer Audit Programme**

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**Introduction:** Accurate information on the management of colorectal cancer is essential in the evaluation of healthcare outcomes of patients with colorectal cancer. The National Bowel Cancer Audit Programme (NBOCAP) will collect data from regional centres and its successful implementation is dependent on the submission of accurate data. Data for the regional database is obtained prospectively from patient records by non-clinical staff.

**Aim:** To determine the accuracy and completeness of a regional colorectal cancer database.

**Method:** Records were obtained for 50 patients selected at random from the database. 18 key data points (preoperative and operative) were selected from the Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland (ACPGBI) colorectal cancer minimum data set. Data was extracted from the case notes by a clinician and compared with database entries.

**Results:** All 18 key data points were available in 4% of case notes. Of the remainder, 17% of all data points were absent from the patient records including 25% of operative data. There was agreement between patient records and the database for 61% of data points overall, 70% of preoperative data and 47% of operative data.

**Conclusion:** The regional colorectal cancer database is inaccurate, particularly regarding operative data. Insufficient information in patient records accounts for a proportion of missing data, and lack of agreement between records and the database may be due to misinterpretation of records by non-clinical staff. The accuracy of regional data may be improved by use of a proforma to be completed prospectively by the patient's clinician.