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CANCER REFERRALS TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN AN NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

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Background

Cancer affects many individuals of working age¹. Having supportive discussions regarding fitness for work following diagnosis and providing sensitive advice is an important role within Occupational Health (OH).

Aims

- To identify main cancer types, age groups and occupations of affected employees
- To identify the outcome of OH assessments
- To develop a “brief-intervention” package of information for employees

Methods

An audit was undertaken in January 2023 of all cancer-related management and self-referrals received by the Newcastle OH Service from 2019 to 2022.

Data was gathered on age, gender, job role, banding, work status, working-hours, type of cancer, outcome of assessment.

Results

160 staff were identified as having been referred to OH with a diagnosis of cancer over the 4 years. 135 (84%) were female and 25 (16%) were male.

The most common cancers were:

- 1) Breast (43%)
- 2) Colorectal (12.5%)
- 3) Skin (2.6%)

The highest prevalence of diagnoses were ages 50-55 years.

Nursing staff comprised the majority (40%), followed by administrative staff (20%), Allied Health Professional (8%), Estates & Facilities (8%), medical (8%); the remainder were other job roles.

68% of staff were supported to remain at work with adjustments; 14% remained absent under review; 10% applied for ill health retirement; 4% had a mutually agreed termination of their contract; 3% died in service and 1% were redeployed.

Conclusion

The majority of the staff assessed were supported to remain at work with adjustments. A brief intervention will be developed regarding cancer and its impact on work, which will be used in such consultations.

Reference:

1. Cancer Research UK: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/> esearch UK Accessed 02 02 2023