

Summary of Finnish National Cancer Plan

In 2020, over 33,000 people will get cancer, i.e., 27 per cent more than in 2008. In 2004-2020, cancer-related costs will triple to around EUR 1.5 billion per year. The working group drew up proposals for intensifying and improving cancer treatments and defined the bodies responsible for the implementation. The purpose is to improve or at the very least maintain the current good treatment outcomes equally in the whole country and in different population groups.

The interval between the arrival of a referral concerning a suspected case of cancer and the start of the primary treatment should not be longer than six weeks. Adjuvant therapies should start, depending on the patient's state of health, no later than four weeks after the surgical treatment.

The diagnostics, therapies, and follow-up of cancer must be based on national and international recommendations. The care and quality criteria must apply to both the public and the private health services. Demanding surgery, as well as diagnostics and drug and radiation therapies requiring special skills or expensive investments must be centralised. The planning of some cancer treatments can be centralised, while the treatment is carried out close to the patient's home. The significance of primary health care is highlighted with regard to follow-up of cancer patients and the palliative care of advanced cancer. The benefits, harm, and costs of new treatments must be assessed based on a uniform national procedure. Good quality palliative treatment must be available in all health care settings. Electronic information systems as well as interactive and multichannel communication must be utilized. Patients' participation will be increased. The increasing number of cancer patients and demanding treatment requires higher levels of staff. Especially there will be a great need for oncologists, pathologists, nurses specialized in treating cancer, and general practitioners. The number of positions for specializing doctors in all university hospitals will be increased and the attractiveness of the cancer sector is improved.