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Publication date
2018

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Nienhuys, K. NG., Passchier, E., Beck, A-J. CC., van den Brekel, M. WM., Klop, W. M., van der Molen, L., & Stuiver, M. M. (2018). *Tailored interdisciplinary head and neck rehabilitation, state of the art.* Abstract from 11th International Head and Neck Cancer Quality of Life Conference, Leeds, United Kingdom.

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Tailored interdisciplinary head and neck rehabilitation, state of the art.

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Keywords: head and neck cancer rehabilitation; interdisciplinary care; quality of life; societal participation

Abstract:

Since 2011, the Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI) offers a tailored, interdisciplinary head and neck rehabilitation (IHNR) program, covered by the healthcare insurance, to patients with advanced head and neck cancer. The program is based on the ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health¹) model. It aims to optimize health related quality of life (HRQoL) by preserving or restoring patients' physical functioning, activity level, and societal participation.

A unique feature of IHNR is that it is offered throughout the cancer care continuum. It can start prior to, during, or after treatment completion, depending on patients' needs, abilities and preferences. Limitations and risks for reduced physical, psychological or social functioning are identified timely, during consultations with a case manager or a physiatrist. Shared decision making is used to identify the most important individual rehabilitation needs, and to select goals, and interventions to achieve these goals.

IHNR is provided by a multidisciplinary team including medical specialists and allied health professionals specialized in head and neck oncology. The IHNR program consists of modular interventions, which are based on the best available evidence and tailored to individual needs and abilities. Weekly multidisciplinary team meetings are used to evaluate and align treatment strategies of the involved health care providers, and to evaluate progress. A prospective observational study, performed in 2016, demonstrated the feasibility of IHNR and its positive contribution to recovery and HRQoL².

In our presentation, we will present the content of the IHNR program, using cases to illustrate it, discuss the lessons learned in 7 years of experience with the program, and ongoing research³.

References

¹International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health : ICF. Geneva :World Health Organization, 2001.

²Passchier E, Stuiver MM, van der Molen L, Kerkhof SI, van den Brekel MW, Hilgers FJ. Feasibility and impact of a dedicated multidisciplinary rehabilitation program on health-related quality of life in advanced head and neck cancer patients. *Eur Arch Otorhinolaryngol.* 2016 Jun;273(6):1577-87.

³ACC Beck MD*, E Passchier, RN MSc *, VP Retèl PhD, MM Stuiver PhD, L van der Molen, PhD, WMC Klop MD PhD, WH van Harten MD PhD, MWM van den Brekel MD PhD. Design of a prospective multicenter study comparing (cost-)effectiveness of a tailored interdisciplinary head and neck rehabilitation program to usual supportive care for patients treated with concomitant chemo- or bioradiotherapy. Submitted to *BMC Cancer* Apr 2018.