



National Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2018

Seeing a GP

November 2020



The National Cancer Patient Experience Survey

The NCPES survey asks patients about their experience with NHS cancer care in England. A national report is publicly available which summarises the findings for cancer patients on average. However, as there may be differences in patient experience of care across cancer types Myeloma UK have analysed the NCPES survey data to focus on the myeloma patient experience. We have also made comparisons with the experience of other cancer patients to see if the findings are consistent with other cancers in general.

Survey participants

The 2018 NCPES questionnaire was sent to all adults (aged 16+) who had a confirmed primary diagnosis of cancer and were discharged from an NHS Trust for cancer-related treatment between April-June 2018. The overall response rate was 64%, or 73,817 participants, of which 4966 were myeloma patients.

Myeloma patients in this survey are older and more likely to be male than patients with other cancers in general (Table 1).

Age	Myeloma ¹ (N=4,966)	Other cancers ¹ (N=68,851)
16-24	0.0	0.4
25-34	0.1	1.1
35-44	0.8	3.2
45-54	5.7	10.5
55-64	19.0	21.6
65-74	38.1	35.7
75-84	30.1	23.0
85+	6.2	4.5
Sex		
Male	59.2	46.5
Female	40.8	53.5
Ethnicity		
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	9.3	7.9
White	84.7	81.5
Not specified or suppressed ²	5.9	10.5

Table 1. Percentage of myeloma and other cancer patients in the NCPES 2018 survey by self-reported age, sex, and ethnicity

¹ Totals may not sum to 100% exactly due to rounding.

² NCPES suppresses results for categories where there are a small number of respondents to minimise the risk of individuals being identified.

Seeing your GP

This section summarises results of patient experiences seeing a GP.

Before you were told you needed to go to hospital about cancer, how many times did you see your GP about the health problem caused by cancer?

The results showed that myeloma patients are more likely to see their GP multiple times before seeing a specialist compared to the other cancer average (Figure 1).

Over one third of myeloma patients have to see their GP three or more times before being told they needed to go to hospital about their cancer. Only one quarter of myeloma patients saw their GP just once, compared to almost half of patients for other cancers. One in five myeloma patients did not present to their GP before going to hospital.

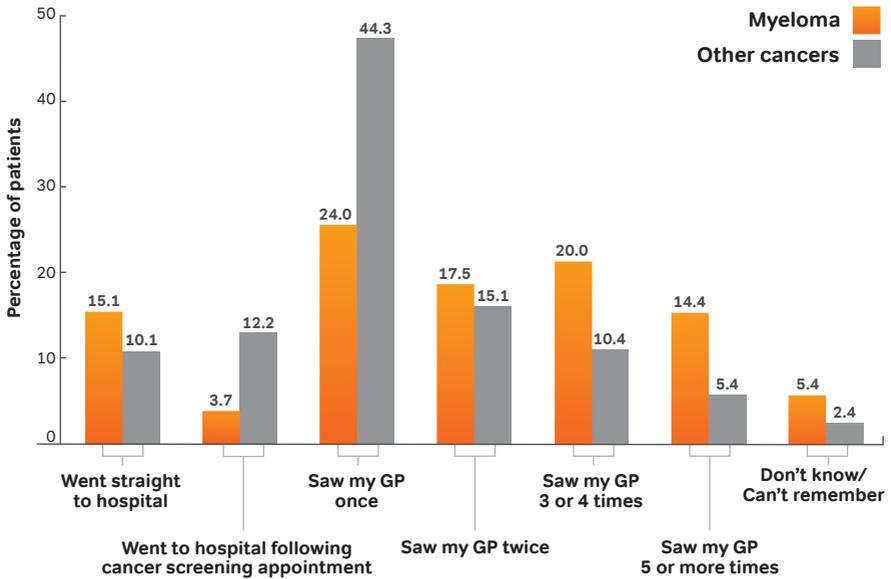


Figure 1. Percentage of myeloma and other cancer patients by the number of times they had to see their GP before they were told they needed to go to hospital about cancer.

Myeloma UK is disappointed that so many myeloma patients need to see their doctor three or more times before being told they need to go to hospital about their cancer.

How do you feel about the length of time you had to wait before your first appointment with a hospital doctor?

The majority of myeloma patients felt that the wait time to first see a hospital doctor was about right although almost 20% felt that they should have been seen sooner (Figure 2).

Compared to other cancers, slightly fewer myeloma patients felt that they had been seen as soon as they thought was necessary. Of those myeloma patients who felt that they should have been seen a lot sooner, the vast majority (82.5%) had seen their doctor three or more times before being told they needed to go to hospital for their cancer.

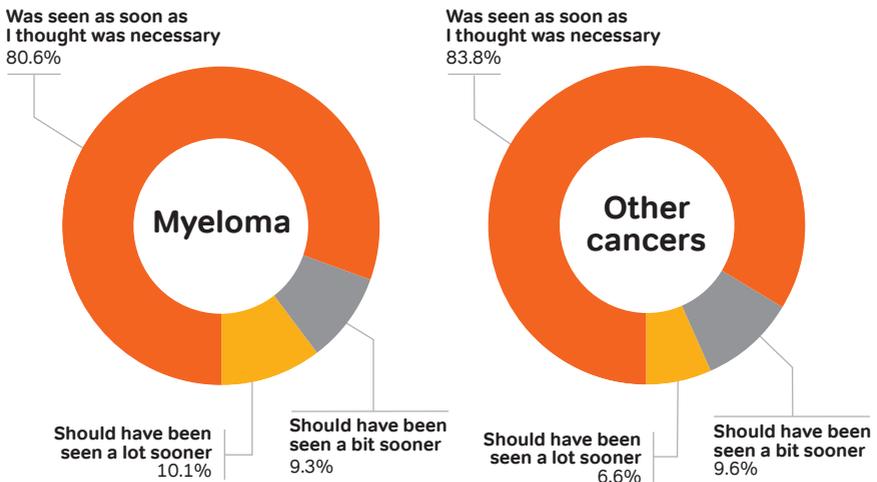


Figure 2. Percentage of myeloma and other cancer patients by the length of time they had to wait before their first appointment with a hospital doctor.

Myeloma UK is pleased that the majority of patients are seen by a hospital doctor as soon as they think is necessary but recognises that there are several patients who feel that they should have been seen sooner.

How long was it from the time you first thought something might be wrong with you until you first saw a GP or other doctor?

Myeloma patients were less likely to be seen within 3 months than other cancer patients. Three quarters of myeloma patients were seen within three months (Figure 3).

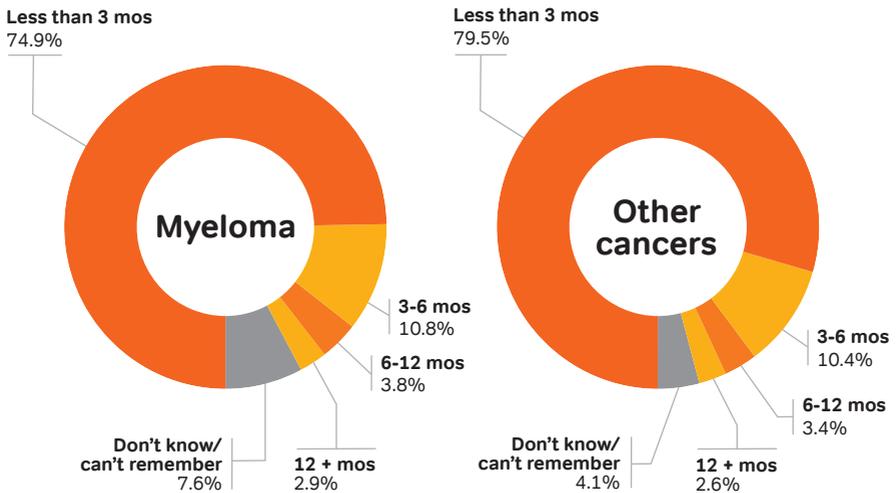


Figure 3. Percentage of myeloma and other cancer patients by the until they first saw a GP or doctor after they first thought something might be wrong.

Myeloma UK is glad that the majority of patients are seeing a GP within the first three months of thinking there is something wrong but there are still a lot of patients who are not seeing a GP within this time frame.

Patient experience of seeing a GP by demographic characteristics

The percentage of myeloma patients by age, sex, and ethnicity who had a positive experience with seeing a GP is shown in Table 2

Age	Saw GP once or twice		Saw hospital doctor as soon as patient thought necessary		Saw doctor in less than three months	
	Myeloma	Other cancers	Myeloma	Other cancers	Myeloma	Other cancers
16-54	30.2	60.1	71.5	77.6	72.3	79.3
55-64	36.9	55.1	77.1	82.7	76.0	79.7
65-74	41.7	58.2	80.1	85.3	76.3	80.4
75-84	46.4	64.3	83.9	85.9	73.6	78.7
85+	44.4	64.7	89.1	88.2	70.5	76.2
Sex						
Male	43.5	62.2	81.6	83.4	77.0	77.3
Female	38.5	57.0	79.1	84.2	71.7	81.5
Ethnicity						
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	31.0	52.0	72.8	77.2	64.5	73.1
White	42.9	60.4	81.5	84.6	76.0	80.4

Table 2. Percentage of myeloma and other cancer patients with a positive GP experience by age, sex, and ethnicity.

Age

Similar to other cancers in general there were some differences across age groups in the number of times patients needed to see their doctor before being told they needed to go to hospital about their cancer. Myeloma patients aged 16-54 had the least positive experiences across myeloma patients, whereas, patients aged 55-64 had the least positive experience for other cancers in general. Similar to other cancers in general, older myeloma patients had a more positive experience than younger patients in appointment wait times seeing their doctor as soon as they thought necessary. However, the proportion of myeloma patients seeing a doctor within three months was similar across ages.

Sex

Similar to other cancers in general, male myeloma patients are more likely than female myeloma patients to see their doctor just once or twice before being told they needed to go to hospital about their cancer. Male myeloma patients also had a more positive experience than female myeloma patients in being seen as soon as they thought was necessary and seeing a doctor within three months. This differs to other cancers in general where female patients have a more positive experience than men.

Ethnicity

Similar to other cancers in general, black and minority myeloma patients report a less positive experience in the number of times they needed to see their GP before being told they needed to go to hospital about their cancer, the time they had to wait until their first appointment with a hospital doctor and the time they first saw a doctor compared to white myeloma patients.

Myeloma UK is concerned about the ethnic disparities in myeloma patient experience with black and minority patients reporting a less positive experience seeing a GP than white patients.

Summary

- Myeloma patients are more likely to see their GP multiple times before seeing a specialist compared to the other cancer average. Only one quarter of myeloma patients saw their GP just once before being told they needed to go to hospital about their cancer.
- The majority of myeloma patients felt that the wait time to first see a hospital doctor was about right although almost 20% felt that they should have been seen sooner.
- Three quarters of myeloma patients saw a GP within three months of thinking something was wrong with them.
- There were clear ethnic differences in myeloma GP care, with black and minority patients having a poorer experience compared to white patients.
- Male myeloma patients were more likely to have a positive GP experience than female myeloma patients.

Acknowledgements

The data from the National Cancer Patient Experience Survey were obtained from the UK Data Service:

NHS England, Quality Health. (2019). National Cancer Patient Experience Survey, 2018. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 8570, <https://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8570-1>

Would you like to know more?

You can read more about this project on our website:
myeloma.org.uk/research-and-patient-advocacy/health-services-research-programme

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