



[Hospital capacity and waiting time for treatment--is there a connection?]

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Abstract: BACKGROUND: The association between hospital capacity and waiting time for treatment is uncertain. MATERIAL AND METHODS: Waiting times for patients on waiting lists for inpatient treatment in 1998 were analysed to disclose possible associations with the hospitals' treatment resources, i.e., general costs, number of beds, doctors or nurses in relation to the population of its catchment area, and the relation between acute and elective admissions. Waiting times were calculated from the National Patient Register, which collects information on hospital stays. Resource data and data on acute admissions were taken from the SAMDATA publications for 1998. RESULTS: Median waiting time varied from 50 to 300 days among the hospitals. Statistical regression models were, however, unable to explain the variation in waiting time on the basis of any variable related to hospital resources or acute admissions that may influence the capacity for elective admissions. INTERPRETATION: To avoid breaches of the guarantees for patients guaranteed a maximum of three months on the waiting list, the median waiting time should be below 12-15 days. This goal may, however, be much too ambitious in view of the fact that the median waiting time for patients with mammary or colon cancer is about 30 days.

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