



#### **Measure Concept #4: Timely Treatment Initiation for Newly Diagnosed Head and Neck Cancer**

##### **Measure Description:**

Percentage of patients aged 18 years and older with newly diagnosed oral cavity, oropharyngeal, laryngeal, or hypopharyngeal SCC (squamous cell carcinoma) who initiate definitive curative-intent treatment within 30 days of pathologic diagnosis.

##### **Denominator:**

Patients aged 18 years and older with newly diagnosed oral cavity, oropharyngeal, laryngeal, or hypopharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) who are eligible for definitive curative-intent treatment.

##### **Numerator:**

Patients who initiate definitive curative-intent treatment within 30 days of the pathologic diagnosis date

##### **Supporting Clinical Guidance:**

Several professional guidelines and quality initiatives support timely initiation of treatment for head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC), including cancers of the oral cavity, oropharynx, larynx, and hypopharynx. Evidence consistently demonstrates that delays in treatment initiation are associated with worse oncologic outcomes and decreased survival. The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) and other head and neck oncology organizations emphasize timely, guideline-adherent treatment as a core component of quality cancer care. Studies evaluating time-to-treatment initiation in HNSCC have shown that prolonged intervals between pathologic diagnosis and definitive treatment are associated with increased mortality risk, particularly in oral cavity cancers.

In addition, the American Head and Neck Society (AHNS), in collaboration with the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC), has endorsed quality initiatives focused on reducing delays in treatment initiation for patients with HNSCC, including timely initiation of postoperative radiation therapy.

American Head and Neck Society. (2022, May 23). *American College of Surgeons (ACS)/Commission on Cancer (CoC) approved quality metric for head and neck cancer*. <https://www.ahns.info/acs-coc-hnc/>

Graboyes, E. M., et al. (2024). *Update on adherence to guidelines for time to initiation of postoperative radiation therapy in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma*. *Head & Neck*. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10797635/>

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National Comprehensive Cancer Network. (2025). *NCCN Guidelines® insights: Head and neck cancers, version 2.2025*. *Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network*, 23(2). <https://jnccn.org/view/journals/jnccn/23/2/article-p2.xml>

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