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# An audit cycle for the appropriateness of tumor marker, carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), request in a model 3 hospital in Ireland

Iayla Fatima, Gearoid Murphy,  
Niamh Ni Mhaonaigh, Adham Sadoon

Department of Surgery, St. Luke's General Hospital, Kilkenny, Ireland

**Background:** Tumor markers play an important role in cancer cases and their application in practice needs an understanding of its pathophysiology, testing techniques, range of values and their role in any given malignancy. The appropriate use of tumor marker testing is facilitated by national and international guidelines, inappropriate use increases both the laboratory workload and cost. Our aim was to assess our practice against the Association of Clinical Biochemists in Ireland (ACBI) guidelines and conduct teaching sessions to improve practice.

**Methods:** 1st cycle: all carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) tests ordered in the hospital between the 1st to 31st of October were obtained through the HSE Online Lab Web Inquiry System, files were then reviewed for more information. Information collected included the patients demographics, requesting speciality and if the test was indicated. Results from the initial audit were presented to the department and two separate teaching sessions were conducted to educate on the guidelines. 2nd cycle: all CEA test ordered from 1st January to 28th February 2021 were obtained, re-audited and results were compared.

**Results:** Seventy-six percent of the tests ordered by General

Surgery were appropriately ordered and incorrectly ordered tests decreased from 35.7% to 23.8%.

**Conclusions:** Through the process of this audit an improvement was seen in practice of the department. More tests ordered adhered to indications in guidelines.

**Keywords:** Association of Clinical Biochemists in Ireland (ACBI); audit; carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA); general surgery; tumor

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### Footnote

*Conflicts of Interest:* The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

*Ethical Statement:* The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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