

Ovarian cancer guidelines

Due to MO:	11 September 2025	Reference	HNZ00093501
To:	Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health		
From:	Dr Richard Sullivan, Executive National Director - Clinical		
Copy to:	n/a		
Security level:	In Confidence	Priority	Routine
Consulted	Te Aho o Te Kahu Cancer Control Agency		
Proactive Release:	This title is proposed by Health NZ for proactive release		

Contact for further discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Phone	1st contact
Dr Richard Sullivan	Executive National Director - Clinical	s 9(2)(a)	x
Professor Christopher Jackson	Co-lead, Cancer National Clinical Network	s 9(2)(a)	

Purpose

1. This Aide-Mémoire provides advice on considerations for developing national clinical guidelines for the diagnosis and management of ovarian cancer.

Discussion

Optimal Cancer Care Pathways

2. The Optimal Cancer Care Pathways (OCCPs) by cancer tumour stream are a national framework that describe contemporary best practice pathway guidance and expectations for the delivery of publicly-funded optimal cancer care in Aotearoa New Zealand.
3. OCCPs describe the optimal cancer pathways. They are designed to be used in conjunction with clinical guidelines, ensuring a comprehensive approach to cancer care.
4. The Ovarian OCCP Edition One, alongside the OCCP Principles and OCCP Supplementary Information documents, were released in July 2025. This would be updated if new national guidelines for ovarian cancer diagnosis and management were developed and/or reflect any changes to community Health Pathways.

National Clinical Guidelines

5. Health NZ is beginning to consider how to manage the recommendations provided by Te Aho o Te Kahu in the range of OCCP that have been published.
6. It is expected that this will involve working closely with Te Aho o Te Kahu to take stock of achievement against recommendations in OCCP, evaluate resources required to implement, prioritise and allocate resources to implement those recommendations that Health NZ decides to adopt. This is something that Health NZ is beginning to work through and there is not yet a confirmed project plan.

National Guidelines for Ovarian Cancer Diagnosis and Management

7. The development of a comprehensive, evidence-informed national guideline would be a significant undertaking, requiring extensive scoping, clinical leadership and alignment with national frameworks and standards of care.
8. The scope and effort involved will vary depending on the level of existing clinical consensus, the availability of relevant expertise and interest, and the number and diversity of health professional groups and stakeholders that need to be engaged. It would also involve formal approval from relevant professional colleges and other organisations.
9. Developing a clinical guideline requires a structured process, including establishing a representative working group, reviewing national and international evidence, securing professional and consumer endorsement, and planning for publication and implementation. This approach ensures guidelines are evidence-based, equitable and nationally consistent, although additional funding may be required to support rollout.
10. In considering a national guideline, the following would be required:
 - a) Developing a national clinical guideline for ovarian diagnosis and management would cover early detection; presentation, initial diagnosis and referral; staging and

treatment; and care after treatment.

- b) Alignment with the Optimal Cancer Care Pathway (OCCP) methodology to ensure consistency with patient-centred, multidisciplinary models of care.
 - c) Appropriate resourcing, including clinical expertise, programme support, and project management to scope, develop, consult and implement the guideline.
 - d) Engagement across primary, secondary and tertiary services, alongside consumer, equity, and Māori health input, and a formal national endorsement process.
 - e) Consideration of the implications to the national three centre gynae oncology service model of care would be required. Noting, due to current sector constraints, there is only capacity for two centres.
 - f) Consideration of the capacity of clinical experts required to create the guideline would also be required, given the current service constraints.
11. Health NZ and Te Aho o Te Kahu recognise that developing national clinical guidelines is a significant and resource-intensive undertaking, with previous attempts in other tumour streams highlighting the challenges of sustainability, implementation and compliance.

Next steps

12. At present, the priority is building cross-tumour infrastructure that directly supports consistent, high-quality cancer care – for example the Faster Cancer Treatment targets, 2+2 wait time initiative, medicines access, linear accelerator rollout, stem cell transplant capacity and complex surgical centralisation.
13. Clinical groups may continue to express interest in national guidelines to improve care and resourcing. Health NZ and Te Aho o Te Kahu consider that the OCCPs, alongside reporting and follow-on quality improvement plans, currently provide the most effective national mechanism for driving improvements in cancer care.
14. Any proposal to develop national clinical guidelines for ovarian cancer will need to be carefully weighed against competing priorities and assessed for feasibility and resourcing. Health NZ and Te Aho o Te Kahu will engage with the National Clinical Cancer Network to consider whether development of a national guideline is appropriate.