

Background

Since the emergence of COVID-19, there have been increasing concerns about delays and/or discontinuations in cancer care. In Australia in 2020, there were relatively low COVID-19 infection rates, with the first wave of infections occurring in March 2020 and a second wave in July 2020. It is unclear to what extent systemic cancer therapy was impacted by COVID-19 in Australia in the context of low rates of COVID-19 transmission in 2020.

Aim

COVID-19 cases, hospitalisations and restrictions in Australia in 2020

Result

Dispensing, initiation and discontinuation of all antineoplastic medicines

- March to December 2020: no decrease in antineoplastic dispensing
- March 2020: temporary increase in dispensing (39/100,000 population) and initiation of all antineoplastic medicines (3/100,000 population)
- April 2020: temporary increase in discontinuation of antineoplastic medicines (35/1,000 people treated)

Dispensing, initiation and discontinuation of chemotherapy by drug class

- April 2020: temporary decrease in chemotherapy initiation (-2/100,000 population) and temporary increase in chemotherapy discontinuation (52/1,000 treated)

Dispensing of hormone therapy

- Temporary increase in March 2020 (51/100,000 population) and decrease from April 2020 onwards (-34/100,000 population), likely due to stockpiling

Black line = March 2020, Grey line = July 2020