



UNITED KINGDOM  
LUNG CANCER COALITION

**Nursing Times**  
**3 November 2009**  
**Circ: 30,923**

## Access to cancer specialists branded 'woefully inadequate'

Shortages in the number of specialist cancer nurses have been laid bare in two national audits of NHS trusts.

Access to specialists was described as "woefully inadequate" in a review by the Lung Cancer Coalition that highlights variations in care around the country.

Latest estimates suggest there are just over 200 specialist lung cancer nurses across England supporting 38,000 diagnoses a year, the review says.

This means patients are receiving "very limited" advice and support to manage their needs during, before and after treatment.

The report states: "In the current economic climate we must ensure that specialist nurses are not a target for cuts."

Bradford Teaching Hospitals

foundation trust lead lung cancer clinical nurse specialist Nicola Bell told *Nursing Times* that patients were not getting the support they needed following surgery.

She said: "[After surgery] patients feel quite isolated and

frightened and because we're dealing with other patients they aren't followed up as well as they should be."

Chemotherapy nurses were increasingly stretched due to guidelines recommending that patients should be contacted after

each cycle of treatment, leaving lung cancer specialists with a higher workload, she said.

The shortages left specialist nurses with little time to train more junior staff, leading to problems in succession planning, she added.

The report coincided with findings in the national bowel cancer audit showing that just over half of patients saw a clinical nurse specialist in 2007-08.

This is despite National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidance stating that all patients should see a specialist nurse.

The audit, which looked at patients diagnosed between April 2006 and July 2008, revealed there had been an improvement compared with 2006-07, when only 41 per cent of patients accessed a specialist nurse.



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