**Efficient referral of soft tissue sarcomas –do simple referral guidelines and an open access lump clinic result in redundant referrals?**

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**Background and purpose:**

Soft tissue tumours suspicious of soft tissue sarcomas (STS) should be referred to a sarcoma centre for diagnosis and treatment. The Scandinavian Sarcoma Group’s referral guidelines are simple (soft tissue tumours ≥5cm and/or deep-seated). In the southern Swedish health care region these guidelines are combined with an open-access lump clinic with no requirements of prereferral investigations or specified level of referring institution. This has resulted in referral of nearly all STS to our sarcoma centre before surgery but also a lot of tumours which after investigation turned out to be benign. We here present a retrospective study describing all soft tissue tumours examined at our centre during 1 year in order to determine the ratio between malignant/benign tumours referred.

**Methods:**

All patients with soft tissue lumps visiting our out-patient clinic for the first time during 2004 were identified (n=246). Data regarding cytological and imaging investigations were collected as well as final diagnosis and further management.

**Results:**

Preliminary data of 225/246 patients show that 15% had a STS, 7% had other malignancies and the remaining had benign diagnoses. 40% of all patients with a benign diagnosis were operated at the sarcoma centre (eg deep lipomas [30%], neurilemmomas [5%]) and 16% were referred to a local hospital for treatment. 42% were not treated once the benign diagnosis was made.

**Interpretation:**

Simple referral guidelines combined with an open-access lump clinic is efficient for centralization of STS treatment. The number of benign tumours investigated we find manageable and, moreover, many of the benign tumours are best treated by oncologic surgeons.