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Summary

Pancreatic lesions: Primary care perspectives

Gianluca Cassese

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Digestive Oncology | Primary Care | Pancreas

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Primary care plays a central role in pancreatic cancer management as the first point of contact for early recognition, the start of multidisciplinary care pathways, and ongoing support during treatment and recovery beyond hospital walls.

KEY POINTS

- The speaker emphasizes that most patients first present to primary care with pancreatic lesions, where red flag symptoms such as new onset diabetes and jaundice should trigger early recognition and referral, though these symptoms are non-specific and diagnosis remains challenging.
- Primary care is positioned as the first pillar of multidisciplinary care, beginning the enhanced recovery pathway before hospital admission through patient education, nutrition support, diabetes optimization, and smoking and alcohol cessation.
- The speaker's centre routinely performs nutritional screening for all oncological patients at first consultation using a dedicated team, though following patients outside the hospital while awaiting treatment remains challenging.
- During adjuvant treatment and palliative care phases, primary care providers serve as the first link for managing symptoms such as fatigue, weight loss, depression, and anxiety in the community setting.
- Future priorities include implementing stronger multidisciplinary networks with digital integration to support early diagnosis and coordinated patient-centred care across hospital and community settings, though gaps and inequalities in implementation persist.
- The speaker suggests Europe needs large studies to determine which patients with new onset diabetes should undergo imaging for pancreatic cancer screening, given the high prevalence of diabetes with traditional risk factors.

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