INTRODUCTION

• Neuroendocrine tumors (NETs) are rare and complex neoplasms, affecting multiple organs, but most commonly the gastrointestinal tract.¹
• NETs incidence and prevalence is increasing globally; making it one of the fastest growing classes of cancer.¹
• The International Neuroendocrine Cancer Alliance (INCA) consists of 26 patient advocacy and research groups and supports NET patients and their families by advocating on their behalf to improve diagnosis, care and research.

OBJECTIVES

• This survey (SCAN) aims to measure the global readiness to provide access to diagnostics and treatments for NET patients in terms of:
  - Awareness
  - Availability
  - Quality
  - Affordability

• This analysis focused on responses from NET patients and healthcare professionals on the early diagnosis of NETs in USA and Canada vs the situation globally.

METHODS

• During Sept-Nov 2019, NET patients and healthcare professionals (HCP) completed an online survey.
• The survey was disseminated via social media and NET patient groups’ and medical societies’ networks.
• The survey was available in 14 languages:
  - Arabic, Bulgarian, English, German, Dutch/Flemish, French, Japanese, Hindi, Italian, Mandarin (Chinese), Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish.
• On average, NET patients took 20 minutes and HCPs 11 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

• 2359 NET patients and 436 HCPs from 68 countries responded.
• Of the NET patients 22% (511/2359) were from the United States (US) and 9% (208/2359) were from Canada (CA).
• Primary NETs were most often gastrointestinal (GEP) NETs, slightly less in US and more in CA than globally (Global: 71% [1670/2359]; US: 63% [323/511]; CA: 74% [154/208]; p<0.0001, Chi-squared, Figure 1).

RESULTS

Misdagnosis

• Almost half of patients were initially misdiagnosed with other conditions at least once: (Global: 44% [1043/2359], US: 48% [245/511]; CA: 46% [96/208], Figure 2).
• Mean time to correct diagnosis was 5 years globally, 6 years in US and 7 years in CA (Figure 2).
• Almost half of patients globally, and significantly higher proportion in US and CA, were diagnosed with stage IV NETs or had metastases at time of diagnosis (Global: 46% [1077/2359]; US: 52% [266/511]; CA: 52% [109/208]; p<0.0001).

Symptoms start

Global United States Canada
0 5 6 7 years

Figure 2: Mean time to receive NET diagnosis and proportion of misdiagnosis

United States: 48% received initial misdiagnosis
Canada: 46% received initial misdiagnosis

Diagnostic Tools

• The diagnostic tools that most often led to correct diagnosis were biopsy (Global: 59% [1392/2359]; US: 55% [281/511]; CA: 57% [119/208]) and CT scan, significantly higher in US and particularly in CA compared to globally (Global: 46% [1060/2359], US: 54% [278/511], CA: 63% [131/208]; p<0.0001, Figure 3).

Figure 3: Diagnostic tool leading to diagnosis

GEP NETs

Patients, %

Global US CA Global US CT CA
71% 63% 10% 15% 19% 21% 13% 13%

Global US CA Global US CA
59% 55% 57% 46% 54% 63%

CA: Canada; US: United States

In Canada more conventional imaging tools were used for diagnostics versus the US and globally (Figure 4):
• MRI (Global: 23% [543/2359], US: 25% [128/511], CA: 31% [65/208]; p<0.0001)
• Octreotide Scan (Global: 15% [354/2359], US: 13% [66/511], CA: 30% [62/208]; p<0.0001)
• Ultrasound (Global: 17% [401/2359], US: 16% [82/511], CA: 26% [54/208]; p<0.0001)

Specialized Gallium 68 DOTANOC PET CT was of significantly lower usage both in US and CA versus globally (Global: 18% [425/2359], US: 13% [66/511], CA: 4% [8/208]; p<0.0001, Figure 4).

Figure 4: Usage of conventional and specialised diagnostic tools

CONCLUSIONS

• Misdiagnosis is a global challenge for NET patients.
• Late diagnostic staging of NETs, significantly pronounced in US and CA, may influence therapies and shorten life expectancy.
• More recent diagnostic tools need to be applied both in US and CA for early detection and complete staging.
• This survey further contributes to positioning NET research on an equal footing with other cancers of similar prevalence.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INCA would like to thank all its members as well as its partners: ENETS (European Neuroendocrine Tumor Society), NANETS (North American Neuroendocrine Tumor Society), APNETS (Asia-Pacific Neuroendocrine Tumor Society), CommNETS (Commonwealth Neuroendocrine Tumor Group), JNETS (Japan Neuroendocrine Tumor Society), CNETS (Chinese Neuroendocrine Tumor Society), UICC (Union for International Cancer Control), EURORDIS (European Organisation for Rare Diseases), NORD (National Organization for Rare Disorders) and EECO (European Cancer Organisation) and many others for their instrumental support of this global effort.

Strategen Ltd, Winchester, UK provided editorial support to the authors.

FUNDING AND DISCLOSURE

• This study was sponsored by Ipsen, ITM and Novartis.
• The lead author has nothing to declare.