

Additional malignancies in patients with neuroendocrine tumours: analysis of the SwissNET registry

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The association between a diagnosis of a neuroendocrine neoplasm and an increased incidence of diagnosis of a non-neuroendocrine cancer has been recognized for many years with heated debate on the underlying causes. This interesting article from Switzerland analyses all patients with a neuroendocrine neoplasm (NEN) in the newly established Swiss Neuroendocrine Tumour Registry (estb: 2008) to determine those with a diagnosis of an associated malignancy (AM). It analyses the relationship of the AM to the NEN with regard to the anatomical location of both tumours and the timing of diagnosis of the AM in relation to that of the NEN.

934 patients with NEN were registered between 2008 & 2015 with a median follow up of 1.5 years. 21% of these patients were shown to have an AM which is in the same ballpark figure as many other reports. Primary site, NEN grading, functionality and the median follow-up time were not statistically different between the patients with and without AM, however patients with AM were generally older than those without. Interestingly, the anatomical location of the AM was most commonly in the same organ system as the NEN (lung AM along with lung NEN etc) and 93% of AM were either diagnosed prior to or synchronously with diagnosis of the NEN. The authors' conclude that the increased association of associated malignancies with NEN is likely due to detection bias (asymptomatic NEN being picked up during investigations for other cancers) rather than a true biological relationship.