

## The Mastectomy Clinical Pathway: What Has It Achieved?

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** The mastectomy clinical pathway was developed to optimise the clinical care and cost management of breast cancer patients. The aim of this study was to prospectively assess the effect of the mastectomy pathway at the National University Hospital, Singapore over a 7-month period. **Materials and Methods:** A prospective study was carried out on all breast cancer patients admitted for elective mastectomy between March and October 2001. As surrogates of optimised cost and care management, the length of stay and hospital costs, as well as the incidence of complications and unscheduled readmissions, were analysed. Non-pathway mastectomy patients treated from March to October 2000 were used as controls. A total of 83 patients who underwent mastectomy formed the pathway group, while 69 non-pathway patients acted as controls. **Results:** Compared to controls, the mean length of hospital stay decreased significantly from 4.91 days to 4.10 days ( $P = 0.018$ ) and the mean cost per case decreased significantly from \$5,050 to \$4,406 ( $P = 0.014$ ) for those in the pathway group. There were no significant differences in the complications and unscheduled hospital readmission rates between the two groups ( $P > 0.05$ ). **Conclusion:** The implementation of mastectomy clinical pathway has improved consistency in patient's treatment, the quality of patient outcome, and has reduced the costs of care and length of hospital stay. In addition, variance analysis of the mastectomy pathway has shown to be valuable for problem identification to improve patient care.

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**Key words:** Breast cancer, Cost of care, Length of hospital stay, Problem identification, Quality of care, Surgical treatment

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