

## **Rectal cancer philosophy in Sweden year 2009**

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Rectal cancer treatment in Sweden has changed dramatically. In the late 70's and early 80's the nationwide local recurrence rate was approximately 40%. Due to this several randomized trials with radiotherapy was started in our country. Based upon those trials we could prove that radiotherapy, preferably given preoperatively, reduced the local recurrence rate with 50%. During the same time period surgery for rectal cancer started to change with the introduction of the TME (Total Mesorectal Excision) technique. The local recurrence rate dropped even more if TME surgery and radiotherapy was used together and the population based local recurrence rate to date is less than 10%. This has changed the overall survival for rectal cancer patients from in the 70's around 45% up to date with almost 62-63% five years' survival the last 5 years. Actually rectal cancer patients are doing better than colon cancer patients in our country today.

This dramatic change has been based upon nationwide training courses and we have a national rectal cancer registry with transparent reports of all data, where all hospitals are compared. Due to the reports all are aware of the outcome in all places in Sweden. By doing so, there is a friendly competition between the centers how to operate and how to improve the outcome successfully.

**Conclusion:** Transparent reports and nationwide training courses have change the outcome dramatically for patients with a rectal cancer.