INTRODUCTION
In recent years, there has been a shift in focus regarding patient care. Patients are moving from a passive role to being more participatory in their own care. Patient participation promotes autonomy and patient satisfaction and is considered a basic condition for good care. It has been shown that patient involvement in health care is associated with improved treatment outcomes, rehabilitation and recovery.

Details concerning patient participation among patients with upper gastrointestinal malignancies following a fast-track programme are sparse. The aim of this study was to identify and explore patient participation among patients who had received surgery for liver, bile duct and pancreatic cancer.

METHODS
The questionnaire developed and validated by Arnetz et al. 2008 was used and aimed to assess patient participation. The questionnaire consists of 45 forced-choice Likert-type scale questions. The questionnaire created six subscales that summarize the participants’ behaviour, experiences of their care time and definition of patient participation. These six scales are Patient participation, Illness experience, Information, Patient needs, Treatment planning and Activity.

RESULTS
A total of 234 patients were assessed for eligibility, and 162 patients were included. There were 116 answered questionnaires, and all were included in the analysis, resulting in a response rate of 72%. The results from the question “What does patient participation mean to you?” show that clear information was important for the included patients. To have an opportunity to ask questions and express personal views of their health care professionals was also rated highly.

The results showed differences by sex, with men responding to a greater extent that they did not want to make decisions as a patient (P = 0.044). Half of the patients perceived that they had the opportunity to ask questions before discharge to a high degree and 26% to some degree. 47% of the patients had desired to be more involved in their care.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS
Further evaluation and healthcare interventions will be important to meet patients’ needs and to strengthen the patients’ self-care abilities after discharge. An important intervention to improve patient participation may be to visualize all goals in the fast-track programme for the patients to a greater extent. Continuous communications and information about the care goals may motivate the patients and meet their needs.