



Margaret, aged 76,
breast cancer survivor

Breast cancer in women over 70

13 July – 6 September 2015

Last updated: 1 June 2015

In July 2015, Public Health England will be launching a national campaign aimed at raising awareness of the symptoms of breast cancer in women aged 70 and over. We need your help to make it a success.

What is Be Clear on Cancer?

Be Clear on Cancer aims to improve early diagnosis of cancer by raising awareness of symptoms and encouraging people to see their GP without delay.

Has the 'breast cancer in women over 70' campaign been run before?

The campaign was successfully piloted at a local and regional level in 2012 and 2013. It went national, across England, for the first time in February 2014.

Is there any evidence that this campaign will work?

Results from the regional and local pilots were encouraging. The first national campaign, which ran in early 2014, built on these promising results;

When comparing Feb–April 2012 with Feb–April 2014^a, the results for women aged 70 and over show a:

- 64%^b increase in urgent GP referrals for suspected breast cancer and a 75%^b increase for breast symptoms (combined referrals, 67%^b increase)
- 25%^b increase in the number of breast cancers diagnosed via an urgent GP referral^c.

When taking other routes to diagnosis into account (including breast screening), the total number of women aged 70 and over diagnosed with breast cancer increased by 31%^b (comparing March–May 2012 with March–May 2014).

Was there any impact on self-referral for breast screening in women over the age of 70?

During the campaign period (Feb–March 2014), a total of 21,607 women over 70 years old self-referred for breast screening. This compared with 9,175 women in the equivalent six-week period in 2011^a, which represents a net increase of 12,432 self-referrals.

Will the campaign have an impact on GP practices?

Each year, a clinical commissioning group (CCG) will have an average of 65 cases of breast cancer diagnosed in women aged 70 and over.

Analysis from 265 GP practices shows that, on average, the first national breast cancer in women over 70 campaign saw a 42%^b increase in women aged 70 and over attending the GP with a breast symptom during the campaign period (when comparing with control time periods from 2011–2014). This is equivalent to an increase from 0.1 attendances to 0.2 attendances per practice per week.

What is the likely impact on NHS services?

It is difficult to predict the exact impact this campaign will have, but based on the experience from the local, regional and first national campaigns you should plan to see more women referred for both breast cancer and breast symptoms.

Following the national campaign in 2014, on average each trust saw approximately six extra referrals per week for suspected breast cancer and five extra referrals per week for breast symptoms^d. The peak of the referrals was approximately one to two months after the campaign activity started. The impact on services will vary by trust and be influenced by the size and age profile of your local population. You may find it useful to look at the number of requests for appointments, diagnostic tests, urgent referrals and treatment following the breast cancer campaign that ran Feb–March 2014. Use this information to help you plan for the summer 2015 campaign.

Key facts:

- Around 41,200 women in England are diagnosed with breast cancer each year – of which around 13,400 (a third) are aged 70 and over^e
- In England, approximately 5,400 women aged 70 and over die from breast cancer each year. This equates to around 15 women per day^f
- If breast cancer is diagnosed at the earliest stage in women aged 70 and over, 93% will survive for at least five years. This figure is just 13% at the most advanced stage of the disease (stage IV)^g

Is breast screening mentioned in the advertising?

This campaign focuses on symptomatic breast cancer and how older women are at greater risk. However, screening is mentioned in the leaflet which will be distributed to key locations such as GP surgeries and pharmacies.

Women aged over 70 are not routinely invited for breast screening because there is no evidence to support this. They are entitled to self-refer every three years if they wish and just need to make their own appointment. Some women in England aged 71–73 are being invited for breast screening as part of a major research trial, but the results of the trial will not be known until the early 2020s.

A leaflet is available for women which gives information about the possible benefits and risks of breast screening, to allow them to make an informed and personal decision about whether to have breast screening.

What can I do to start preparing for the 'breast cancer in women over 70' campaign?

- Take a look at the advert and read the leaflet, so you know the key messages that will be going out to the public.
- Cascade this information to anyone you think will find it useful. More details will follow so check the NAEDI website regularly over the coming months for further information and briefings.
- Plan for an increase in the demand for services. Use the information in this briefing and your own local data to help you prepare for the summer 2015 campaign.

'Over the last 12 months I have performed surgery on women who have been prompted to get their symptoms checked because of the Be Clear on Cancer campaign. As a surgeon, I am delighted with this because the earlier we can diagnose cancer, the more treatment options we can offer our patients. In my clinic I see some very active, healthy ladies over 70, and treatment decisions are based much more on frailty and comorbidities rather than age.'

Mr Steven Thrush, Consultant Breast Surgeon,
Worcestershire Acute NHS Trusts

Essential information about the national 'breast cancer in women over 70' campaign

Who is the campaign aimed at?

The adverts are primarily aimed at women aged over 70.

Where will activities take place and when?

Advertising will run from 13 July to 6 September 2015. Campaign plans are currently in development but it will include adverts on TV, in print media, and 'out of home' (for example on pharmacy bags).

What is the main message of the campaign?

The key message promoted on TV will be: '1 in 3 women who get breast cancer are over 70, so don't assume you're past it.' The advert also reinforces the message that finding it early makes it more treatable.

A second message, promoted via other campaign materials, will be: 'A lump isn't the only sign of breast cancer' and that women over 70 should tell their doctor if they notice any changes to their breasts.

Why focus on women over 70?

Breast cancer survival is lower in older women and research shows they are more likely to delay presenting to their GP with breast cancer symptoms. Knowledge of non-lump breast cancer symptoms is often lower amongst older women.

Find out more

- **Visit** naedi.org/beclearoncancer for more campaign information and resources for healthcare professionals. The NAEDI website will be updated and new briefings and information added when they become available.
- **Email** beclearoncancer@nhs.uk and include BC70+ in the title of your email.
- From early June the campaign pages on NHS Choices will be refreshed and will host the public-facing materials.

a Local pilots ran Jan–March 2012. The regional pilot ran Jan–March 2013, therefore 2012 was used as a base year for the referral data. 2011 has been used for the screening data comparisons due to a three-year screening round.

b The result is statistically significant.

c Combined results for both the suspected breast cancer referral and breast symptoms referral.

d Data analysis provided by Department of Health.

e Incidence data supplied by West Midlands Knowledge & Intelligence Team (KIT) based on National Cancer Registration Service (NCRS) data. Based on ICD-10:C50.

f Deaths data supplied by West Midlands KIT based on Office for National Statistics data. Based on ICD-10:C50.
g NCRS data, analysed by West Midlands KIT, PHE.