Patient factors in timely presentation and diagnosis

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Patient factors in early diagnosis of cancer

What are the key behaviours?

- Screening participation

- Timely help-seeking for symptoms ('patient interval')
Patient factors in early diagnosis of cancer

What are the key behaviours?

- Screening participation

- Timely help-seeking for symptoms (‘patient interval’)

Are patient factors modifiable?

Institute of Medicine ‘Improving Diagnosis in Healthcare’ 2015

Model of Pathways to Treatment (Scott et al 2013; Br J Health Psychol)
‘We can save many lives; probably upwards of 40% of those who die each year, if we educate laymen to visit their doctor at the first sign of the disease’

Clarence Little, 1937; interview with the New York Times

Low public awareness—progress?

Cancer Awareness Measure (CAM), Stubbings et al 2009; Robb et al, 2009, British Journal of Cancer.

– Symptom awareness
– Anticipated time before help-seeking
– Barriers to timely presentation
– Risk factor awareness

Advantages:
– Baseline against which to evaluate trends
– Comparisons across demographic groups
– International comparisons
– Evaluation of public education interventions
Recognition of ‘warning signs’

Niksic et al, BJC, 2015 (n=49270)

But what about real life experiences of symptoms?

Health Surveys (e.g. Whitaker et al, 2014; PLOS One; Whitaker et al, 2016 BJC)
Combined N=3766

People asked about their experience of symptoms (from Cancer Awareness Measure) in past 3 months

Plus questions on:
- symptom characteristics
- psycho-social factors (e.g. knowledge)

Qualitative interviews (e.g. Whitaker et al, 2015; BJGP; Renzi et al, 2015; BJGP)
Combined N=110

People reporting ‘alarm’ symptoms interviewed about their symptom experience/ help-seeking
### Methods to explore patient experience of symptoms/help-seeking

#### Discrete Choice Experiment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Consultation A</th>
<th>Consultation B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long the allocated timeslot for your appointment is</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long you need to wait to get an appointment</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Same day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What time of the day and week the appointment is</td>
<td>Normal working hours only</td>
<td>Any time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which GP you will see</td>
<td>Any GP who is available</td>
<td>GP of your choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How good the doctor is at listening to you</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Browser Tracker pilot project

![Browser Tracker](image)

### Vignette Methodology

**Box 1: Vignettes for nipple rash and axillary lump**

One morning, while having a shower, you notice a red scaly rash on your left nipple [a small lump in your arm pit]. You are not sure if there is anything unusual about the rash [the lump]. You check the other nipple [arm pit] and it looks [feels] fine. Apart from this change, you have not noticed anything about your body that is different from usual.
Modifiable factors?

- Cancer attribution vs. knowledge
- Emotional responses (e.g. fear)
- Attitudes (e.g. cancer avoidance, fatalism)
- Body vigilance
- Social support
- Confidence in interpreting symptoms
- Worry about wasting doctor’s time
- Listening skills of the doctor

Model of influences on patient decision-making

Whitaker et al, 2015; British Journal of Cancer

Beliefs/Emotions
Heuristics

Social support

Warning signs

Body vigilance

Sociodemographics
(SES, age, sex and ethnicity)
Implications for how to modify patient factors (and setting the scene for the next four talks!..)

- Raising public awareness of signs/symptoms in adults is important, but is not a panacea for promoting timely help-seeking for all (Talk 1 and Talk 2)

- Other factors pre-consultation and post-consultation need to be considered (e.g. co-morbidities) (Talk 3)

- Need to understand and tackle socio-demographic inequalities across patient care pathway (e.g. ethnicity, Talk 4)

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