



Be Clear on Cancer: First national breast cancer in women over 70 campaign, 2014

Caveats: This summary presents the results of the metric on early stage at diagnosis. This is one of a series of metric summaries that will be produced for this campaign, each focusing on a different metric. A comprehensive interpretation about the campaign is not included here as this requires a full evaluation of all the metrics. The full evaluation of each campaign is published as a final report incorporating the results of all the metrics. These metrics should not be considered in isolation.

Early stage at diagnosis

The campaign

The first national breast cancer in women over 70 campaign ran from 3 February 2014 to 16 March 2014 in England.

Core campaign messages were:

- '1 in 3 women who get breast cancer are over 70, so don't assume you're past it'.
- 'A lump isn't the only sign of breast cancer. If you're worried about any changes to your breasts, tell your doctor straight away'.

Metric: early stage at diagnosis

This metric considers whether the first national breast campaign had an impact on the proportion of breast cancer (ICD-10 C50) diagnosed at an early stage of 1 or 2 in women aged 70 and over.

Data was extracted from the national cancer analysis system for the diagnosis period October 2012 to September 2014. The analysis period was defined as 2 weeks after the start of the campaign (week 8 of 2014) to 2 months after the end of the campaign (week 20 of 2014). The proportion of early staged cases per week during the analysis period was compared with the overall median for October 2013 to September 2014. The campaign was considered to have a possible impact if a) the proportion per week was the same or higher than the median for 5 or more consecutive weeks and b) this sustained period started during analysis the period.

Results

There were no sustained periods where the proportion of breast cancer diagnosed at an early stage was higher than the 2013 to 2014 median during the analysis period (Figure 1).

Key message

The first national campaign did not appear to have an impact on the proportion of breast cancer diagnosed at an early stage in women aged 70 and over.

Figure 1: Proportion of breast cancer diagnosed at stage 1 or 2 by week, women aged 70 and over, England, October 2012 to September 2014.



Conclusions

The first national breast campaign did not appear to have an impact on the proportion of breast cancer diagnosed at an early stage in women aged 70 and over.

Other metrics being evaluated include GP attendance, urgent GP referrals, conversion and detection rate, emergency presentations and one-year survival.

Considerations

In general, cancer incidence is increasing which may have an impact on trends over time for this and other metrics. So the results must be considered with these underlying trends in mind.

The proportion of staged cases for the Be Clear on Cancer (BCoC) metric summaries was calculated using denominators which excluded cases with unknown stage. Other National Cancer Registration and Analysis (NCRAS) outputs on proportion of staged cases include cases with unknown stage in the denominator. Therefore, the proportions of staged cases reported in the BCoC metrics are different to other NCRAS publications. Excluding cases with unknown stage ensures greater comparability across years for the BCoC metrics, as the proportion of cases with a completed stage has rapidly increased since 2014.

Where the results are statistically significant, there is some evidence for an impact of the campaign. Although underlying trends and other external factors (for example other awareness activities, changing referral guidance) may also affect the results.

Campaigns are more likely to have a greater impact on metrics relating to patient behaviour (for example symptom awareness and GP attendance with relevant symptoms) and use of the healthcare system (for example urgent GP referrals for suspected cancer), compared to disease metrics (for example incidence, stage at diagnosis, and survival).

Find out more about Be Clear on Cancer at:

www.ncin.org.uk/be_clear_on_cancer

www.nhs.uk/be-clear-on-cancer