



Be Clear on Cancer: First national respiratory symptoms campaign, 2016

Caveats: This summary presents the results of the metrics on diagnostics in secondary care. This is one of a series of summaries that will be produced for this campaign, each focusing on a different metric. A comprehensive interpretation of the campaign incorporating a full evaluation of all the metrics is published separately. These metrics should not be considered in isolation.

Diagnostics in secondary care

The campaign

The first national respiratory symptoms campaign ran from 14 July 2016 to 16 October 2016 in England.

The core campaign messages were:

- 'If you've had a cough for three weeks or more, it could be a sign of lung disease, including cancer. Finding it early makes it more treatable. So don't ignore it, tell your doctor.'
- 'If you get out of breath doing things you used to be able to do, it could be a sign of lung or heart disease, or even cancer. Finding it early makes it more treatable. So don't ignore it, tell your doctor.'

Metric:

This metric considers whether the first national respiratory symptoms campaign had an impact on the number of x-rays and CT scans conducted by the NHS for suspected lung cancer.

The data on the total number of x-rays and CT scans conducted for suspected lung cancer, (hereafter referred to as x-rays and CT scans) were obtained from the Diagnostic Imaging Dataset (DID) held on NHS Digital's iView system (<https://iview.hscic.gov.uk/Home/MyData>). Data was restricted to x-rays and CT scans referred via GP surgeries.

This metric compares the difference in the monthly number of x-rays and CT scans between the analysis period of July 2016 to December 2016 and the comparison period of July 2015 to December 2015.

Key message

The first national respiratory symptoms campaign appears to have had an impact on the number of x-rays and CT scans conducted for suspected lung cancer.

Results

Comparing the months July 2016 to December 2016 with July 2015 to December 2015, there was a statistically significant 12.0% increase ($p = 0.006$) in the number of x-rays and CT scans for persons aged 50 years and over and a statistically significant 11.4% increase ($p = 0.028$) in the number of x-rays and CT scans for persons diagnosed at all ages (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of x-rays and CT scans in July 2015 to December 2015 and July 2016 to December 2016, England

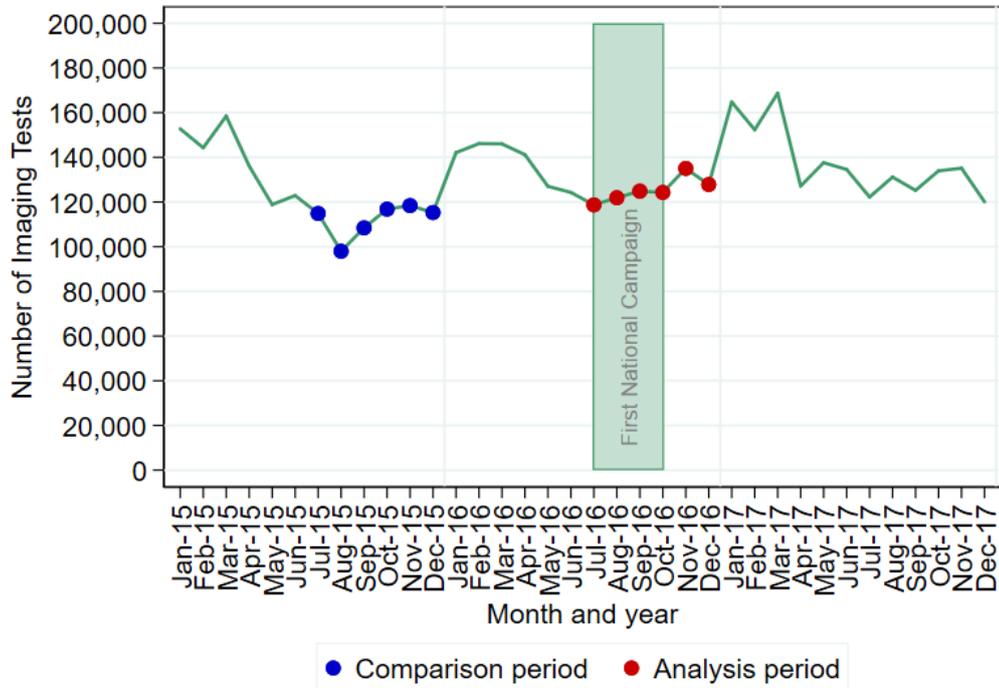
Tests	Age group	July 2015 to December 2015	July 2016 to December 2016	Percentage change	p-value
x-rays and CT scans	50 and over	671,785	752,645	12.0	0.006
	All ages	920,970	1,026,305	11.4	0.028
x-rays	50 and over	651,160	727,735	11.8	0.008
	All ages	897,240	998,085	11.2	0.032
CT scans	50 and over	20,625	24,910	20.8	<0.001
	All ages	23,730	28,220	18.9	<0.001

There were statistically significant 11.8% and 11.2% increases in the number of x-rays comparing the analysis and comparison periods, for persons aged 50 years and over and all ages, respectively (Table 1).

There were statistically significant 20.8% and 18.9% increases in the number of CT scans comparing the analysis and comparison periods, for persons aged 50 years and over and all ages, respectively (Table 1).

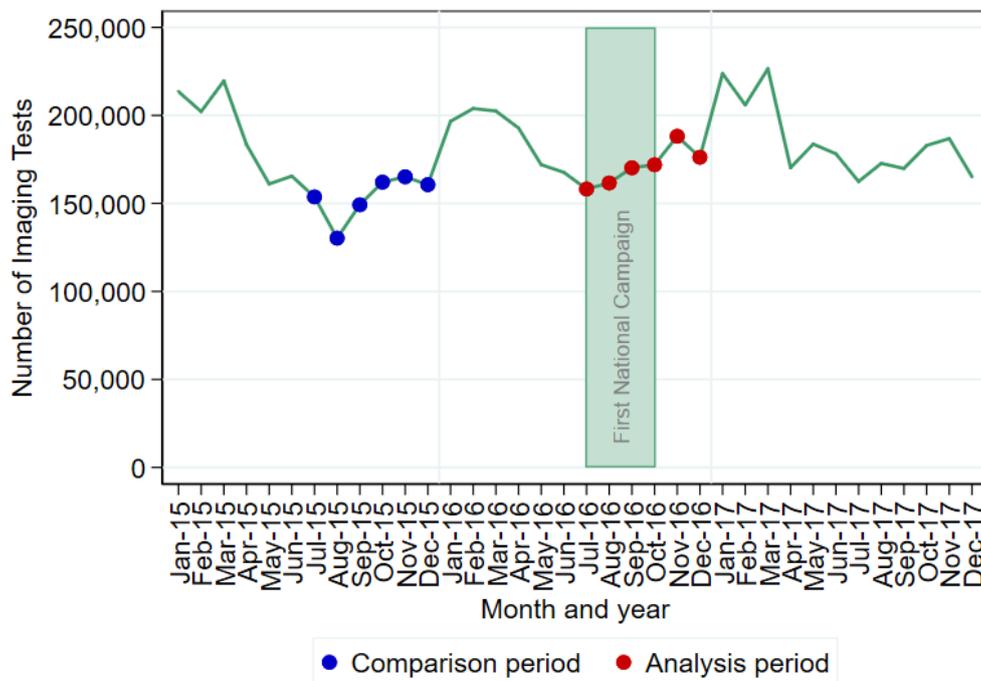
Figure 1: Monthly number of x-rays and CT scans in January 2015 to March 2017, England a) 50 and over b) All ages

a) 50 years and over



Source: iView (<https://iview.hscic.gov.uk/Home/MyData>)

b) All ages



Source: iView (<https://iview.hscic.gov.uk/Home/MyData>)

Conclusion

There was a statistically significant increase in the number of x-rays and CT scans conducted for suspected lung cancer, which appears to be above the long-term trend.

The first national respiratory symptoms campaign appears to have had an impact on the number of x-rays and CT scans conducted for suspected lung cancer.

Other metrics being evaluated include Cancer Waiting Times referrals, conversion and detection rate, numbers of cancers diagnosed, stage at diagnosis 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, and so the results must be considered with these underlying trends in mind.

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 and stage at diagnosis).

Find out more about Be Clear on Cancer at:
www.ncin.org.uk/be_clear_on_cancer
www.nhs.uk/be-clear-on-cancer/