



Be Clear on Cancer: Second national respiratory symptoms campaign, 2017

Caveats: This summary presents the results of the metric on early stage at diagnosis. 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.

Early stage at diagnosis

The campaign

The second national respiratory symptoms campaign ran from 18 May 2017 to 31 August 2017 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: Early stage at diagnosis

This metric considers whether the second national respiratory symptoms campaign had an impact on the proportion of lung cancers (ICD10 C33-34) diagnosed at an early stage of 1, 2 or 3a, for men and women aged 50 years and over, and for all ages combined.

Data was extracted from the national cancer analysis system for the diagnosis period January 2015 to December 2017. The data was grouped into weeks and adjusted to account for bank holidays. Analysis considered the proportion of early stage¹ lung cancers diagnosed in the analysis period compared to the proportion diagnosed in the

Key message

The second national respiratory symptoms campaign may have had some impact on the number of lung cancers diagnosed at an early stage.

¹ Early stage lung cancer was defined as TNM stage 1, 2 and 3a.

same period in 2015². The analysis period was defined as two weeks after the start of the campaign (week 22 of 2017) to two months after the end of the campaign (week 44 of 2017).

Results

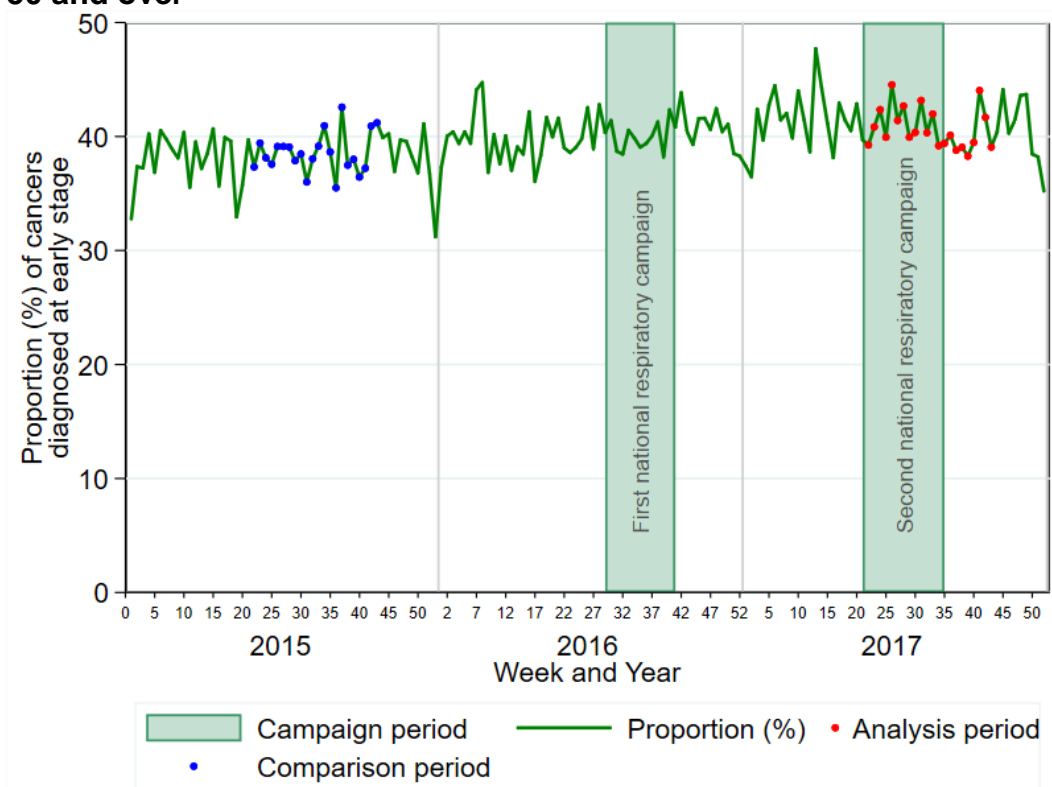
During the analysis period, the proportion of early stage lung cancers diagnosed increased statistically significantly by 2%-points (38.4% in 2015 to 40.5% in 2017) for persons of all ages combined and by 2%-points (38.6% in 2015 to 40.7% in 2017) for persons aged 50 years and over. For both age groups, there was an increasing trend in the proportion of lung cancers diagnosed at an early stage between 2015 and 2017 (Figures 1a and 1b).

When split by gender, small increases in the proportion of lung cancers diagnosed at an early stage between the analysis periods in 2015 and 2017 were seen for both males (1.3%-points, all ages combined) and females (3.0%-points, all ages combined), however, this was only statistically significant for females.

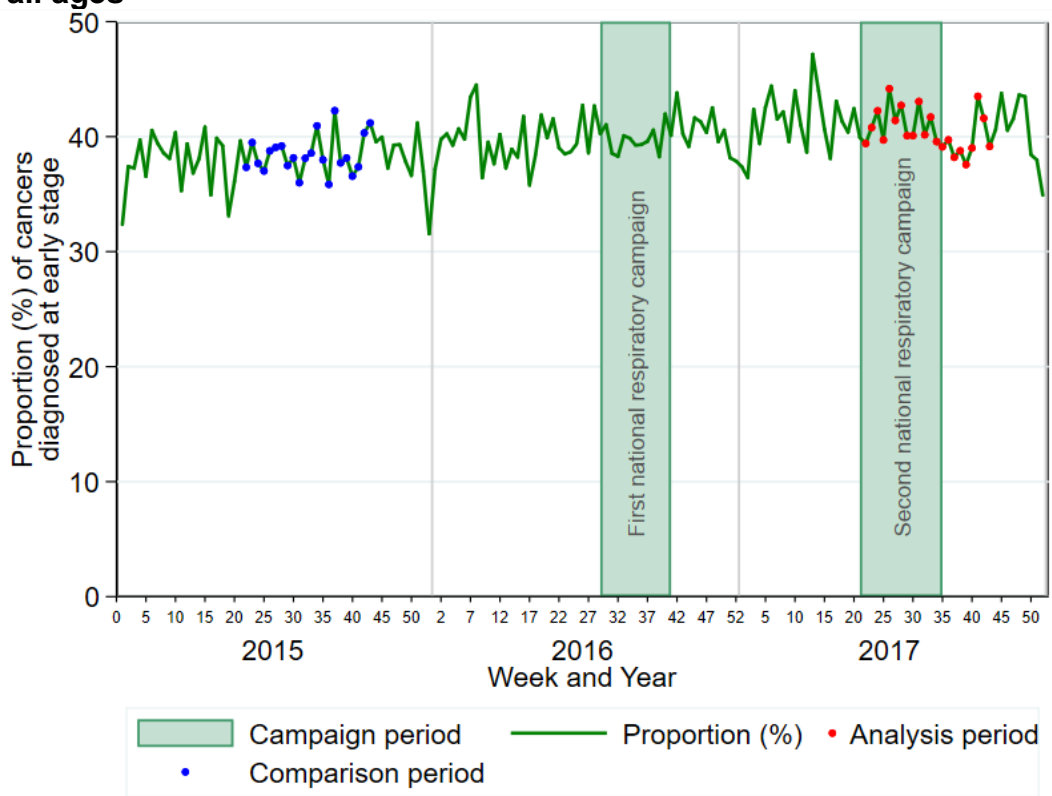
² Data was not compared to the same period in the previous year (2016) as data for this period may be affected by the first national respiratory symptoms campaign which ran from 14 July 2016 to 16 October 2016.

Figure 1: Proportion of lung cancer diagnosed at stage 1, 2 or 3a by week, England, January 2015 to December 2017, a) 50 and over and b) all ages

a) 50 and over



b) all ages



Conclusions

There was a statistically significant increase in the proportion of lung cancers diagnosed at an early stage, though this appears to be in line with the long-term trend.

The second national respiratory symptoms campaign may have had some impact on the number of lung cancers diagnosed at an early stage.

Other metrics being evaluated for this campaign include GP attendance, urgent GP referrals, conversion and detection rates, and emergency presentations.

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.

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 Service (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 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, 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