Evaluation overview of the Be Clear on Cancer lung cancer and respiratory symptoms campaigns

Impact of the lung cancer campaigns (2012 – 2013) on diagnosis

Results from the first national campaign focusing on symptoms of lung cancer, which ran from May to June in 2012, indicated that the campaign changed levels of public awareness. There were indications that clinical outcomes also improved following the campaigns.

This aligned with results from previous lung cancer activities where Be Clear on Cancer changed levels of public awareness and behaviour as well as improving clinical outcomes.

Findings from the campaign that ran in England showed:

- Increases in unprompted awareness of cough as a symptom of lung cancer from 54% pre-campaign to 65% post campaign, with specific mention of persistent or prolonged cough increasing from 12% pre-campaign to 15% post-campaign [1].
- The age group with the largest percentage increase in GP presentations with a cough was for those aged 50 to 59 (up nearly 83% on the same time in 2011) [1].
- An 32% increase in urgent referrals for suspected lung cancer in the campaign months compared with the previous year, with the majority of additional referrals in the over 50s [3].
- An increase of 9.1% in the number of lung cancer cases diagnosed during the months surrounding the campaign [5]. Around 700 more people were diagnosed with lung cancer when compared with the same period in the previous year.
- An increase of 3.1 percentage points for the proportion of non-small cell lung cancers diagnosed at Stage I (14.1% to 17.3%). There was also a corresponding 3.5 percentage point decrease in the proportion of people diagnosed at Stage IV (52.5% to 49.0%) [9].
- Approximately 400 more people had their cancer diagnosed at an early stage and around 300 additional patients had surgery as a first treatment of diagnosed lung cancer [5].

Results in the months surrounding the first national lung cancer campaign (2012):

- Analysis from 486 GP practices showed a statistically significant 63% increase in attendances for cough in the over 50s during the campaign period when compared with the same period in the previous year, equating to an additional 3 visits per practice, per week
- Statistically significant increase (9%) in lung cancer cases diagnosed (equating to 700 additional cases) in patients first seen for lung cancer during the campaign months when compared to the same period in previous year. No significant increase was seen over the control months
- Statistically significant increase, from 23.4% to 26.9%, in the proportion of non-small cell lung cancers diagnosed at early stage (approximately 400 more cancers) across the campaign months when compared to the same time in the previous year. This is matched by a corresponding statistically significant decrease in the proportion diagnosed as late stage.

The second national lung cancer campaign ran in July – August 2013. Tracking research showed that spontaneous knowledge of the key campaign awareness message of a persistent cough increased to a higher level than after the first national campaign (22% after the second national campaign, up from 15% after the first national campaign).

Impact of the lung cancer campaigns (2011 – 2012) on services

Regional pilots

Results from the regional lung cancer campaign in 2011 showed:

- Pilot areas saw a statistically significant (30%) increase in GP referrals for suspected lung cancer during October – December 2011 when compared to the same period in the previous year.
- There was a statistically significant increase in the percentage of small cell lung cancers diagnosed as “limited” in October – December 2011 in the pilot trusts (25.9%) compared with the same period in the previous year (36.6%).

- The percentage of late-stage non-small cell lung cancers decreased significantly in October–December 2011 from the same period in the previous year in the pilot trusts, whilst no significant change was seen in control areas.
- The percentage of carcinoid tumours detected increased significantly in the pilot trusts from 0.4% to 1.3% between October – December 2010 and October – December 2011.

Pilot trusts also saw a statistically significant increase in surgical resections which was not replicated in the non-pilot trusts.

National campaign

During the first national lung cancer campaign, TV adverts ran from May to July 2012.

There was a 20% increase in patients referred for a chest X-ray by a GP during the first month of the campaign compared to the month before [4].

There was an 8% rise in GP- referred CT scans per working day in May 2012, compared with April 2012 [4].

Urgent referrals for suspected lung cancer saw a statistically significant increase of 32% in May – July 2012 when compared to the same period in the previous year.

There was an increase of 2.3 percentage points (13.7% to 16.0%) for the proportion of patients receiving surgical resections as a first definitive treatment [8]. This equated to around 300 more patients during the campaign months. No significant change in surgical resections was seen across the control months.

Impact of the respiratory symptoms campaign (2015)

The breathlessness campaign was piloted first at a local level and then at a regional level, with the aim of scoping whether it was possible to achieve earlier diagnosis of a range of conditions, particularly lung and heart disease but also other conditions such as anxiety.

Evaluation of the regional breathlessness campaign showed that there were significant increases in spontaneous knowledge of what breathlessness could be a sign of:

- lung disease - up from 50% pre-campaign to 60% post campaign
- heart disease - up from 42% pre-campaign to 52% post campaign

Of those people who recalled seeing advertising, when asked to describe the main message, 59% in the pilot region spontaneously mentioned "to encourage people to see their GP if they are getting out of breath" (up from 43% pre-campaign). Similarly, there was an increase in people mentioning that getting out of breath could be a sign of something more serious, up to 44% from 34%.

References

1. Be Clear on Cancer national lung cancer awareness campaign evaluation – impact on patients attending GP appointments. Produced by Mayden, February 2014 for NHS IQ.
2. TNS-BMRB report for the national lung cancer campaign 2012. Produced for Public Health England.
3. National lung cancer awareness campaign: Analysis of urgent GP referrals. An analysis looking at the impact of the national lung cancer awareness campaign on the number of urgent GP referrals for suspected lung cancer. Produced by Trent Cancer Registry, July 2012.
4. NHS England. NHS Diagnostic Imaging Dataset.
5. National Lung Cancer Audit. Data provided by HSCIC.