



Dr Cathy Burton

Bowel cancer: How practice teams can continue to help with the campaign

We need your ongoing support to raise awareness of early diagnosis of cancer.

What is Be Clear on Cancer?

Be Clear on Cancer aims to improve early diagnosis of cancer by raising awareness of symptoms and encouraging more people to see their GP earlier.

The Department of Health reviews the latest evidence and engages with experts to establish which tumour types to focus on. It tests campaigns locally and regionally, before they are rolled out more widely. Be Clear on Cancer has promoted bowel and lung cancer at a national level. It has also been used in local and regional pilots to raise awareness of other cancers, including breast, bladder and kidney cancers.

What activities will be taking place and when?

A national campaign will run on TV and radio from 28 August until the end of September, again highlighting the symptoms of **blood in poo or looser poo for 3 weeks or more**.

Earlier diagnosis of cancer will not be achieved overnight – it's important to keep running these campaigns to sustain the public's awareness of the key symptoms. As this is a 'reminder' campaign, there will be less advertising than in January to March 2012, when 94% of the target audience were likely to have seen the TV advert 16 times. This time, 82% are likely to see the advert 10 times.

Three areas of England will also pilot different approaches to keep the campaign running until mid-March 2013.

Who is the campaign aimed at?

Men and women from lower socioeconomic groups over the age of 55 and their key influencers, such as friends and family.

Why focus on just two key symptoms?

The campaign focuses on 'blood in poo' and 'looser poo' for three or more weeks, because these are the most common symptoms in those diagnosed with bowel cancer.

Why does the campaign use the word 'poo'?

The Department of Health wanted to use everyday language to help people feel more comfortable when discussing these symptoms with their GP. They tested different terms and feedback showed that 'poo' was more commonly used.

What impact will the campaign have on my practice?

Initial findings following the first national bowel cancer campaign are positive:

- Statistically significant increases in the public's unprompted awareness of blood in poo (27% to 42%) and looser poo (10% to 23%);
- Increase in urgent referrals to hospitals compared to the same period in the previous year – more than 85% of the referrals were in people aged over 50.

Although we are waiting for data on the number of patients that visited their GP, we know that the regional bowel cancer pilot in 2011 resulted in an average of one additional patient presenting with relevant symptoms per practice per week.

You may not notice the impact of the campaign straight away – you might see more patients coming through a few weeks into the activity.

Results from the regional pilot are now available. Data on numbers of cancers diagnosed and staging during the first national campaign will follow when these become available.

Supported by

More about bowel cancer

- Around 34,000 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer in England every year and around 13,200 people die from the disease
- Currently only 9% of patients in England are diagnosed with bowel cancer at the earliest stage
- An estimated 1,700 deaths from bowel cancer could be avoided each year if survival rates matched the best in Europe

'The most effective thing I did last time was briefing the whole team, so everyone knew all about the campaign. It was a great way to remind everyone to be mindful in all contact they have with patients and to make sure patients get appointments promptly. Even simple things can make a big difference, like displaying posters throughout the surgery and having leaflets in the waiting area. As Be Clear on Cancer continues, it's important that, as a team, we're supporting it in every way we can.'

Monica Ewart, Practice Manager, Kent

What you need to know

You might find it helpful to keep this guide easily accessible throughout the coming months.

What are the common symptoms of bowel cancer?

The public-facing information highlights a range of symptoms:

- Blood in poo or looser poo for three weeks or more
- A pain or lump in your tummy
- Feeling more tired than usual for some time
- Losing weight for no obvious reason

A patient might experience one of these symptoms, or a combination.

Screening

The Be Clear on Cancer campaign targets patients with symptoms so screening is not mentioned in the TV advert or posters – we want to keep the message simple and direct. But, it is an ideal opportunity to encourage any patients aged over 60 to return their screening kit. GPs will be notified when invitations for bowel cancer screening are being sent out in your area.

If a patient has symptoms, they should see their GP without delay, even if they are waiting for or have just returned their screening kit, or have recently had a negative result.

How do I order campaign materials to put up in our surgery?

You can order leaflets and posters from the Department of Health at orderline.dh.gov.uk

What other support is available for practice teams?

There are lots of resources to support practice teams, including a Cancer Awareness Toolkit for frontline staff and General Practice Profiles showing cancer data for your

individual practice. Your Cancer Network has a GP lead, who can give you and your GPs further information relating to your local area.

Three things you can do to help

1 Brief colleagues. The whole practice team needs to be aware of this campaign. There's a separate briefing sheet for GPs and it's vital receptionists are prepared for patients who have the key symptoms wanting appointments. Encourage everyone to watch the TV advert on NHS Choices to refresh their memory. Research shows that people often don't book an appointment with their doctor when they need to because they're embarrassed, they don't want to waste their GP's time or think they won't be able to get an appointment easily. Receptionists need to be supportive and aware of the campaign.

2 Expect and plan for the campaign. Save this briefing sheet, and the one for GPs, and make sure your team knows they're available. Be prepared for an increase in the number of people sent for diagnostic tests and referred via the urgent two-week wait referral system.

3 Advertise. Display posters and leaflets and encourage your colleagues to talk about the campaign. TV advertising is incredibly powerful at raising awareness of signs and symptoms. But it is often face-to-face discussion that changes behaviour. Talking might prompt someone to make an appointment or open up about their symptoms.

Find out more about Be Clear on Cancer

- Visit www.naedi.org/beclearoncancer for more information for health professionals
- The public-facing website for Be Clear on Cancer is www.nhs.uk/bowelcancer
- Visit www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk for further information about bowel cancer