

Earlier diagnosis

Project

Earlier cancer diagnosis is crucial to improve survival rates, reduce cancers diagnosed in accident and emergency (currently between 25 and 50 per cent) and reduce costly treatment of late-stage cancers which are also harder to treat successfully.

Outline

Multidisciplinary diagnostic centre pilots

Not all symptoms that patients go to see their GP about are straightforward. For patients with vague, but concerning, symptoms such as abdominal pain, weight loss or painless jaundice, it can be difficult to refer them to the most appropriate tests quickly. As a result, these patients often get sent back and forth between GP and hospital, until a diagnosis can be made.

In the pilot areas of London and Manchester, GPs and hospital doctors can now refer patients with vague, but concerning, symptoms to a multidisciplinary diagnostic centre (MDC) where they are initially seen by a clinical nurse specialist who can then refer them for appropriate tests or further investigations to speed up diagnosis or rule out cancer. In Greater Manchester, patients are typically seen by a consultant.

MDCs are an integral part of achieving both the standards of the new 28-day faster diagnosis plan, as outlined by the Independent Cancer Taskforce and the wider investment in greater diagnostic capacity outlined in the Five Year Forward View 'Next Steps' Plan earlier this year.

MDCs are currently running at the following locations across the Cancer Vanguard:

- Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust
- North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust
- UCLH (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust)
- Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
- Withington Community Hospital (part of the University Hospital of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust)
- St George's Hospital
- St Helier Hospital
- Croydon University Hospital

Lung cancer programme

- Our main objective is to improve the earlier diagnosis of lung cancer – currently more than 75 per cent of lung cancer cases are diagnosed at stages 3 or 4 when the cancer is much harder to treat
- We are targeting people at risk of lung cancer because of their smoking history and age, and inviting them to attend a lung health check. The aim of the check is to identify which of those patients may be at higher risk of lung cancer and so eligible for a low-dose CT scan. Referral to local smoking cessation services will also be made where appropriate
- The lung programme is scheduled to start in summer 2018.

Upper and lower GI cancer programme

Colorectal cancer

- Colorectal cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK and the second biggest cancer killer because it is often diagnosed at a late stage. If detected early, people have an excellent chance of successful treatment.
- Our colorectal cancer work aims to improve endoscopy services to drive earlier diagnosis of colorectal and other gastrointestinal cancers. Projects include:
 - Reducing the number of unnecessary colonoscopies by piloting a simple stool test that could rule out bowel cancer in south and north west London (NICE FIT study) and in north central and east London, west Essex and East Lancashire (qFIT Pilot)
 - Improving waiting times through supporting the rollout of the triage Straight- to-Test pathway for colorectal cancer
 - Improving endoscopy unit efficiency

Upper GI cancer

- Around 20,000 people are diagnosed with upper gastrointestinal cancers each year in the UK, but survival rates are poor. Just 12 per cent of patients with oesophageal cancer and one per cent of patients with pancreatic cancer live more than 10 years following diagnosis.
- UCLH Cancer Collaborative is leading two new biomarker trials with the aim of developing simple and cheap tests that can detect pancreatic and oesophageal cancers earlier.

Primary care

- Raising awareness among the general public and supporting GPs in recognising early signs and symptoms through various e-learning training including pilot of the Gateway-C learning platform in London, development of a colorectal module in partnership with RCGP and roll out of a training package with BMJ.

Contact

For more information about our earlier diagnosis work, please contact:

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