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Protecting and improving the nation's health

Be Clear on Cancer: Second national breast cancer in women over 70 awareness campaign, 2015

Caveats: This summary presents the results of the metrics on cancer diagnoses recorded in the Cancer Waiting Times database and detection rate. This is one of a series of metric summaries that will be produced for this campaign, each focusing on a different metric. A comprehensive interpretation about the campaign is not included here as this requires a full evaluation of all the metrics. The full evaluation will be part of the final campaign report which will be published in due course. These metrics should not be considered in isolation.

Cancer diagnoses recorded in the Cancer Waiting Times database and detection rate

Key messages
There is some evidence that the second national campaign had an impact on the number of breast cancer diagnoses recorded in the Cancer Waiting Times database for women aged 70 and over.

However, the campaign does not appear to have had an impact on breast cancer detection rates for these women.

The campaign
The national breast cancer in women over 70 awareness campaign ran from 13 July 2015 to 6 September 2015 in England.

Two key messages were promoted:
- 'One in three women who get breast cancer are over 70, so don't assume you're past it.'
- 'A lump isn't the only sign of breast cancer. If you're worried about any changes to your breasts, tell your doctor straight away.'

Metric: Cancer diagnoses recorded in the CWT database
This metric considers whether the second national breast cancer in women over 70 awareness campaign had an impact on all breast cancer diagnoses recorded in the Cancer Waiting Time (CWT) database.

Metric: Detection rates
This metric considers whether the second national breast cancer in women over 70 awareness campaign had an impact on the proportion of new CWT recorded breast cancer cases which resulted from a two week wait referral (urgent GP referral for suspected breast cancer or breast symptom referral, detection rate).
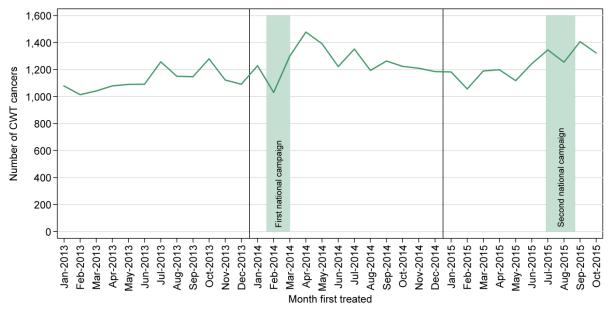
Data are taken from the National Cancer Waiting Times Monitoring Data Set, provided by NHS England. Results are presented by month of first treatment. Taking into consideration the average interval from date first seen to treatment start date, analysis considers the

impact of the second national campaign for these two metrics with data from August 2015 onwards. For both metrics, the analysis compared the period August to October 2015 with the same three months in 2014. Breast cancer cases were defined as those with an ICD-10 diagnosis code of C50 or D05.

Results

From at least January 2013, there has been an upwards trend in the number of CWT recorded breast cancer diagnoses in England for women aged 70 and over (Figure 1). In England, there was a statistically significant increase in the number of CWT recorded breast cancer diagnoses between August to October 2014 and the same months in 2015 of 8%; from 3,679 to 3,984. Although the number of diagnoses in September and October 2015 were higher than in each of the months since the impact of the first national campaign (in early 2014), the number of diagnoses appeared higher than expected from June 2015.

Figure 1: Monthly number of breast cancer diagnoses recorded in the CWT database, from January 2013 to October 2015, England, women aged 70 and over
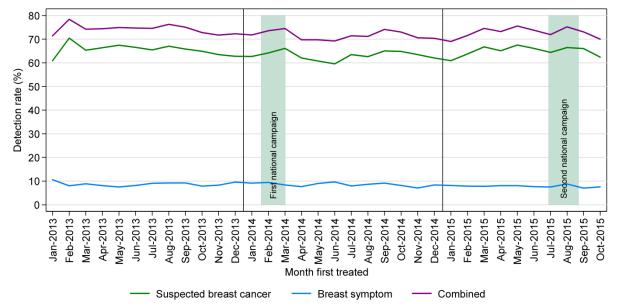

There were no statistically significant changes in detection rates for breast cancer diagnoses from either suspected breast cancer referrals or breast symptom referrals in England for the target age group, between August to October 2014 and the same months in 2015 (Figure 2). For women aged under 70, over the same period, there was a statistically significant increase of 2.3 percentage points in the breast cancer detection rate from urgent GP referrals for suspected breast cancer, although the detection rate for August to October 2015 appeared consistent with the underlying trend.

There were no changes in detection rates from breast symptom referrals for women in any age group.

Figure 2: **Monthly detection rates for breast cancer diagnoses, from urgent GP referrals for suspected breast cancer, breast symptom referrals and combined referrals, January 2013 to October 2015, England, women aged 70 and over**

Conclusions

The campaign may have had some impact on the number of breast cancer diagnoses recorded in the CWT database for women aged 70 and over. However, the campaign does not appear to have had an impact on breast cancer detection rates in these women.

Other metrics being evaluated include emergency presentations, two week wait referrals, conversation rates, numbers of cancers diagnosed, stage at diagnosis and one-year survival. A full evaluation report will be published on the campaign metrics when all of the results are available.

Considerations

In general, cancer incidence is increasing which may have an impact on trends over time for this and other metrics; 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 (eg 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 (eg symptom awareness and GP attendance with relevant symptoms) and use of the healthcare system (eg urgent GP referrals for suspected cancer), compared to disease metrics (eg incidence, stage at diagnosis, and survival).

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