



Be Clear on Cancer: Regional abdominal symptoms campaign, 2017

Caveats: This summary presents the results of the metric on diagnostics in secondary care. 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.

Diagnostics in secondary care

The campaign

The regional abdominal cancer campaign ran from 9 February 2017 to 31 March 2017, in the East and West Midlands.

The campaign's key message was:

'Don't ignore the warning signs. If you've been suffering from tummy troubles such as diarrhoea, bloating, discomfort or anything else that just doesn't feel right for three weeks or more, it could be a sign of cancer. Finding it early makes it more treatable. Tell your doctor.'

Metric: Diagnostics in secondary care

This metric considers whether the regional abdominal cancer campaign had an impact on the number of imaging tests conducted by the NHS for suspected abdominal-related cancers: colorectal cancer, oesophageal cancer, ovarian cancer, pancreatic cancer, stomach cancer and renal cancer. These tests will include those conducted for suspected abdominal cancers and other medical conditions.

The data on the total number of imaging tests conducted for suspected abdominal cancers and other medical conditions was obtained from the Diagnostic Imaging Dataset (DID) held on NHS Digital's iView system (<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/iview>). The data contains details of referrals by GPs, consultants and other referral types.

This metric compares the difference in the monthly number of imaging tests between the analysis period of February to May 2017 and the comparison period of February to May 2016.

Key messages

There was no statistically significant change in the number of imaging tests carried out during or following the regional abdominal symptoms campaign, when compared with the same period in 2016.

Results

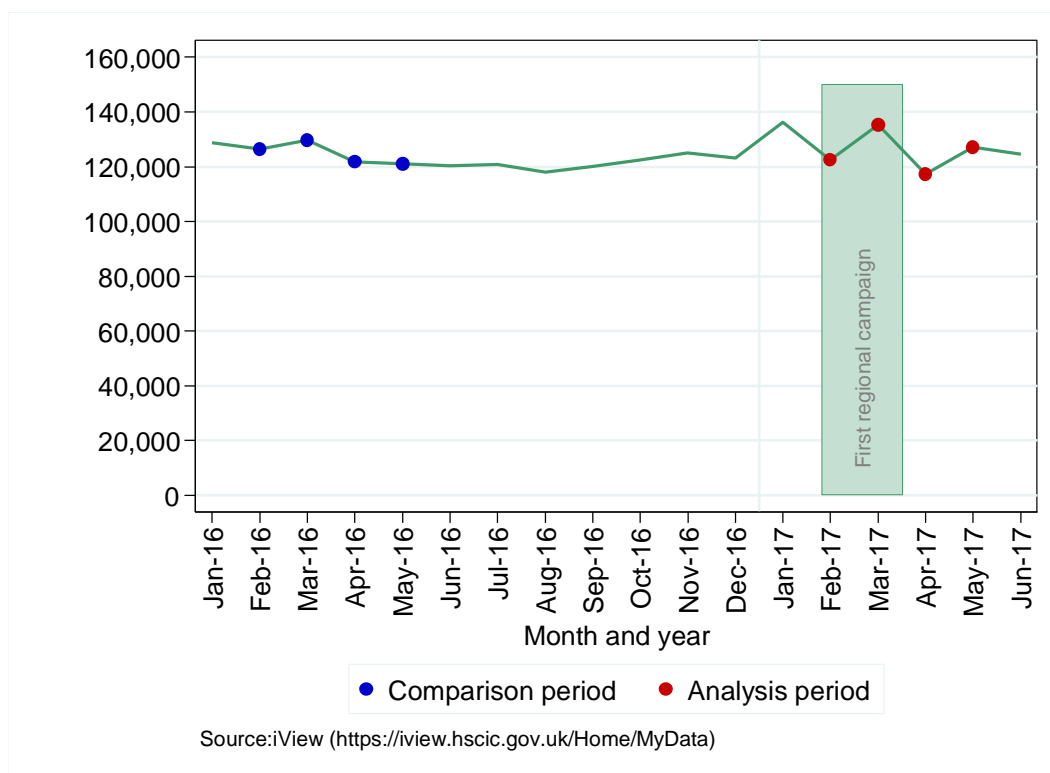
Comparing the months of February to May 2017 with February to May 2016 there was a 0.6% increase in the number of imaging tests for individuals aged 50 and over, and a 0.5% decrease in the number of imaging tests in all ages (Table 1). However, the changes in the number of imaging tests were not statistically significant.

Table 1: Number of imaging tests in February 2016 to May 2016 and February 2017 to May 2017, East and West Midlands

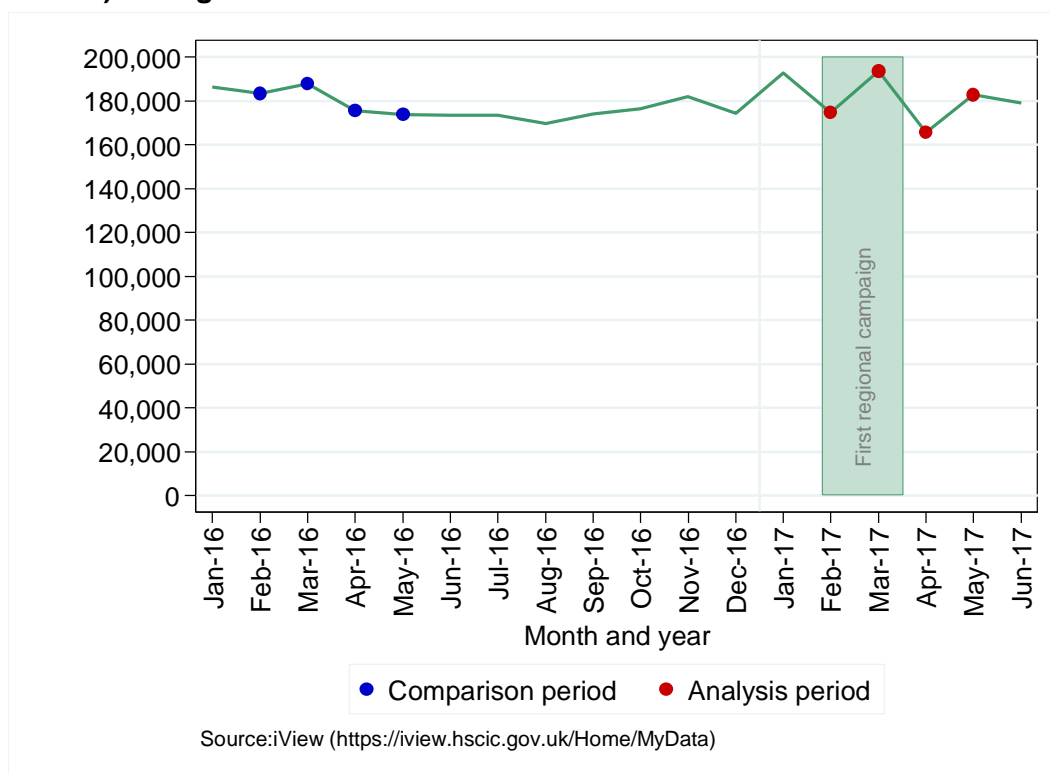
Tests	Age group	February 2016 to May 2016	February 2017 to May 2017	Percentage change
Number of imaging test	50 and over	499,175	502,235	0.6
	All ages	720,880	716,935	-0.5

Figure 1: Monthly number of imaging tests in January 2016 to June 2017, East and West Midlands a) 50 and over b) All ages

a) 50 and over



b) All ages



Conclusions

The regional abdominal symptoms campaign did not appear to have an impact on the number of imaging tests carried out for suspected abdominal-related cancers.

Other metrics being evaluated include Cancer Waiting Times referrals, conversion and detection 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, and so 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/