



Be Clear on Cancer: Third national lung cancer campaign, 2014

Caveats: This summary presents the results of the metric on GP attendances. 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.

GP attendances

The campaign

The third national lung cancer campaign ran from 10 March 2014 to 30 April 2014 in England.

The campaign's key message was:

'If you've been coughing for 3 weeks or more, tell your doctor'.

Key message

The 2014 campaign may have led to a statistically significant increase in the number of GP attendances for a cough.

Metric: GP attendances

This metric considers whether the campaign had an impact on the number of patients visiting a GP to report a persistent cough.

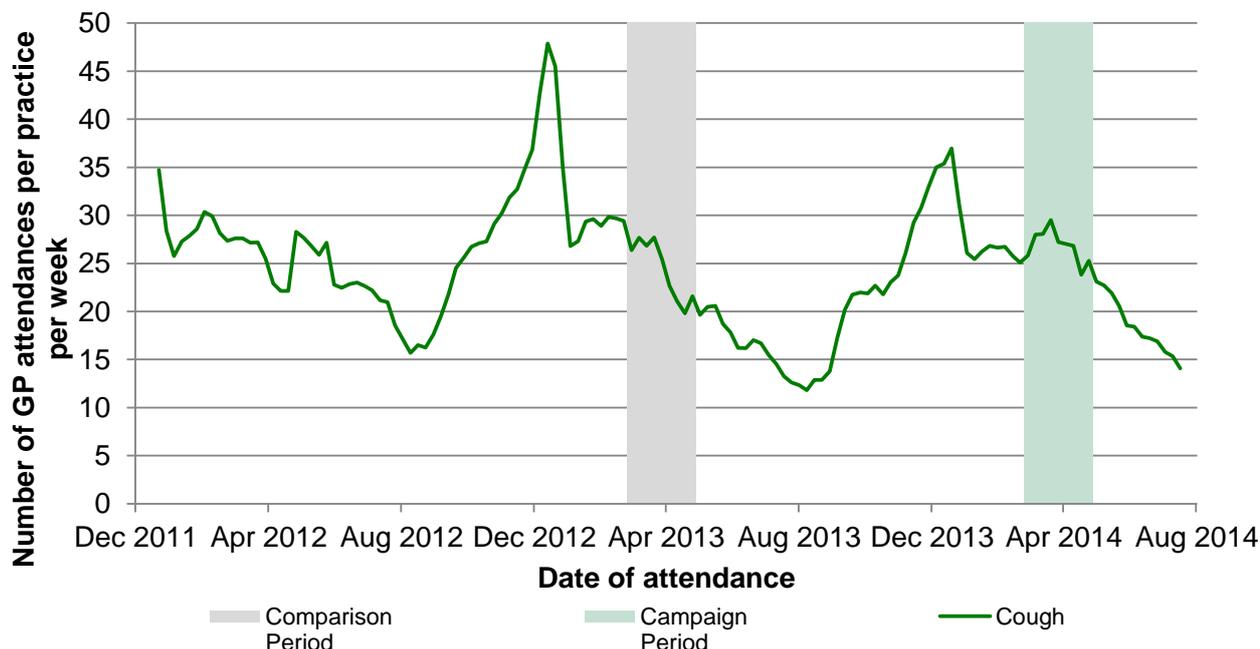
Data on GP attendances reporting a cough or a control symptom (back pain) were sourced from The Health Improvement Network (THIN) database for the period 2 January 2012 to 3 August 2014. The data was grouped into weeks and adjusted to account for bank holidays. Information on the number of GP practices submitting data each week (which decreased from 439 to 347 practices over the period considered¹) was also extracted, to enable the calculation of the average number of attendances per practice per week.

Analysis considered three periods; a twelve week pre-campaign period (16 December 2013 to 9 March 2014), a nine week campaign period (10 March 2014 to 11 May 2014) and a twelve week post-campaign period (12 May 2014 to 3 August 2014). It compared the average number of GP attendances per practice per week during these periods in 2014 with the same periods one year earlier, in 2013.

Results

There is a seasonal trend in the number of GP attendances per practice per week for a cough, with lower numbers in summer and higher numbers in winter, peaking in December 2012 and January 2013 (Figure 1). There may have been a slight increase in attendances during the campaign period.

Figure 1: Average number of GP attendances, per practice per week, for a cough, 2 January 2012 to 3 August 2014, all ages



Source: The Health Improvement Network

During the 2014 campaign period, for patients of all ages the number of attendances for a cough showed a statistically significant increase 10.2% ($p < 0.001$) when compared with the same period in 2013 (from 24.36 visits per practice per week in 2013 to 26.84 visits per practice per week in 2014). Results for the control symptom (back pain) showed no statistically significant change during the 2014 campaign period, compared with the same period in 2013. For cough, the number of visits per GP practice per week was also larger during the post campaign period in 2014 than during the same period in 2013; there was a 7.6% increase ($p < 0.001$), from 17.23 visits per GP practice per week in 2013 to 18.55 visits per practice per week in 2014.

For patients aged 50 years and over the number of attendances for a cough during the 2014 campaign period showed a statistically significant increase of 7.5% ($p < 0.001$) when compared with the same period in 2013.

Conclusions

The third national lung cancer campaign may have led to an increase in the number of GP attendances for a cough.

Other metrics being evaluated include the number of urgent GP referrals for suspected cancer, 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/

¹ Compared to all practices nationally, these practices had a similar age-sex population structure, but a less deprived population on average.