

How Practice Teams can prepare for Be Clear on Cancer

Following a successful regional Be Clear on Cancer bowel cancer campaign pilot, the Department of Health will be launching a national bowel cancer awareness campaign from 30 January 2012. The campaign will run until the end of March.

Further information, including patient resources and information about bowel cancer incidence and mortality, is available at: www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/be-clear-on-cancer-bowel.

Q What is the Be Clear on Cancer campaign?

A Be Clear on Cancer is a Department of Health campaign which aims to improve early diagnosis of cancer by raising the public's awareness of the symptoms of cancer and encouraging people to see their doctor earlier. The Be Clear on Cancer bowel campaign is the first national Government campaign to raise awareness of the early signs and symptoms of bowel cancer. Advertisements will feature on national TV, radio and press; there will also be online activity and advertising on local buses and public events across the country.

The campaign encourages people over 55 who have **blood in their poo or loose poo for more than 3 weeks** to see their doctor.

Q Why is the campaign focusing on blood in poo or looser poo as key symptoms?

A Keeping the message simple is important for any health campaign to be effective. As well as the importance of raising public awareness of the key symptoms of bowel cancer, the chosen symptoms were based on clinical expert advice. Evidence also shows that loose poo and rectal bleeding are the most common symptoms in people diagnosed with bowel cancer.

The campaign uses the term 'poo' as everyday language helps people feel comfortable when discussing symptoms with their GP.

Q How will the campaign improve detection and survival rates?

A In England, it is estimated that around 1700 deaths from bowel cancer could be prevented each year if survival rates matched the best in Europe¹. If diagnosed early, bowel cancer is highly treatable. However, currently only 9% of patients in the UK are diagnosed at the very earliest stage of the disease².

Q How do I order Be Clear on Cancer materials to put up in our surgery?

A Be Clear on Cancer bowel cancer materials can be ordered through the Waiting Room Information Service Website or from the Department of Health. (<http://www.orderline.dh.gov.uk>)

How can I prepare for the campaign?

Brief colleagues.

It's really important that your GPs and other practice staff are aware of the campaign plans. The pilot showed that the impact on primary care was manageable – on average there was only one additional patient per practice per week.

There is a separate briefing sheet for GPs, please make sure they receive this. It is vital that receptionists know that there likely to be more patients wanting to make appointments in response to the national campaign. They need to be supportive and know about the campaign.

As a practice team member you are vital to the success of Be Clear on Cancer. You might find it helpful to keep this guide on your desk throughout the campaign.

1. Richards, M A, *British Journal of Cancer* (2009) 101, S125–S129. www.bjcancer.com, *The size of the prize for earlier diagnosis of cancer in England*

2. Cancerresearchuk.org/type/bowel-cancer/treatments

Advertise.

From 30 January display posters and other information materials, and encourage the practice team to talk about the campaign with patients. There are likely to be people who will visit the surgery who previously may not have considered their symptoms to be serious, or were embarrassed about talking about their symptoms or even worried about wasting the doctor's time. We are keen when patients visit their practice, they are made to feel welcome and allowed to openly discuss their symptoms. Talking might prompt someone to make an appointment.

Make the most of available support and resources.

More information resources, including patient resources are available at Bowel Cancer UK's website, www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/be-clear-on-cancer-bowel.

Bowel Cancer UK can be contacted on **020 7381 9711** or by visiting their website: www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk. There is also a Bowel Cancer Support Service: Freephone **0800 8 40 35 40**.

Bowel Cancer Facts

In England, over 32,000 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer each year and around 13,000 people die from the disease.

In England, bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in women after breast cancer. It is also the third most common in men after prostate and lung cancer.