



Be Clear on Cancer: Regional abdominal symptoms campaign, 2017

Caveats: This summary presents the results of the metric on early stage at diagnosis. This is one of a series of summaries that will be produced for this campaign, each focusing on a different metric. A comprehensive interpretation of the campaign incorporating a full evaluation of all the metrics is published separately. These metrics should not be considered in isolation.

Early stage at diagnosis

The campaign

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

The core campaign 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.'

Key message

There was no evidence to suggest the regional abdominal symptoms campaign had an impact on the proportion of abdominal cancers diagnosed at an early stage.

There was no clear evidence to suggest whether or not the campaign had an impact on the proportion of ovarian cancers diagnosed at an early stage.

Metric: early stage at diagnosis

This metric considers whether the regional abdominal symptoms campaign had an impact on the proportion of abdominal cancers diagnosed at an early stage of 1 or 2, for men and women aged 50 and over, and all ages combined. The analysis considered a combined abdominal cancers group and individual cancer sites: colorectal (ICD10 C18-C20), kidney (C64-C66, C68), oesophageal (C15), ovarian (C56-C57, C48 non-sarcoma) pancreatic (C25) and stomach (C16) cancers. The analysis also compared results for the regional campaign area (East and West Midlands) with those for a control area (South East).

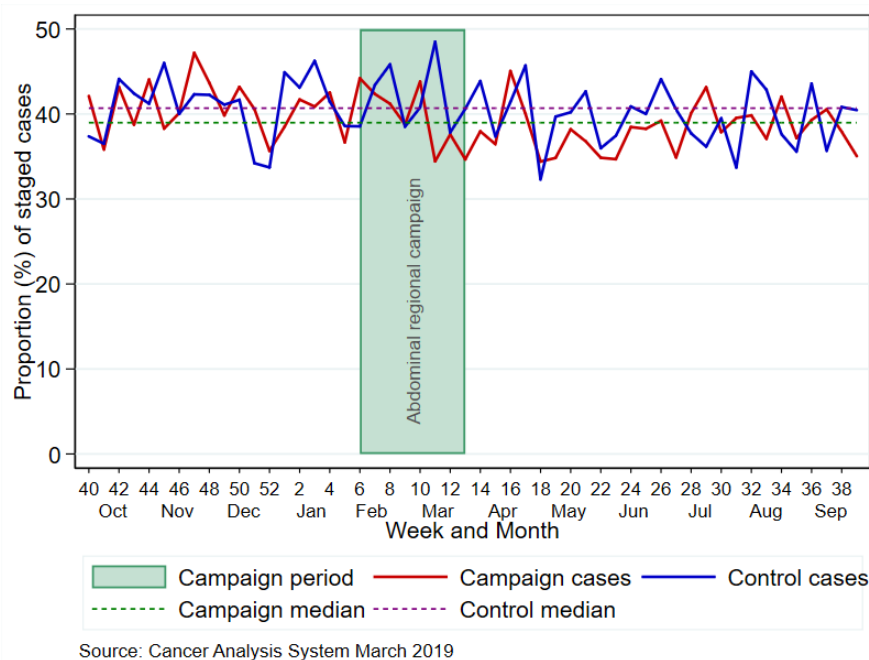
Data was extracted from the national cancer analysis system for the diagnosis period October 2016 to September 2017. The analysis period was defined as two weeks after the start of the campaign (week 8 of 2017) to two months after the end of the campaign (week 22 of 2017). The proportion of early staged cancers diagnosed per week in the analysis period was compared with the overall median for October 2016 to September 2017. The campaign was considered to have a possible impact if a) the proportion per week was the same or higher than the median for five or more consecutive weeks and b) this sustained period started during the analysis period.

Results

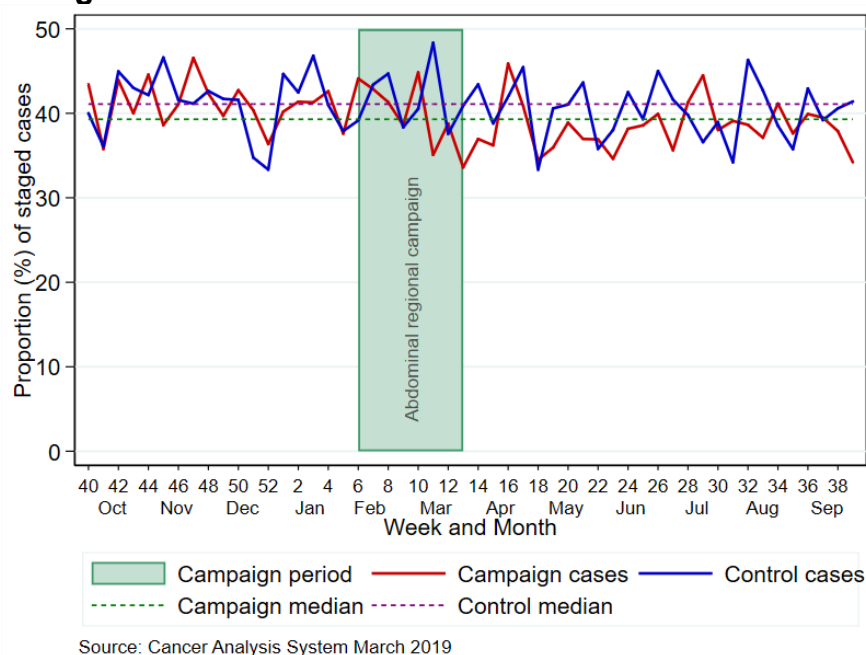
There were no sustained periods starting during the analysis period where the weekly proportion of early stage abdominal cancer was higher than the median for October 2016 to September 2017 for persons aged 50 and over (Figure 1a) or for all ages combined (Figure 1b).

Figure 1: Proportion of abdominal cancer diagnosed at stage 1 or 2 by week, England, October 2016 to September 2017, a) 50 and over and b) all ages

a) 50 and over



b) all ages



There was a sustained period where the proportion of early stage ovarian cancer was similar to, or higher than, the 2016 to 2017 median for people aged 50 and over. During weeks 10 to 14 of 2017, an average of 38% of ovarian cancers were diagnosed at early stage compared with 31% expected based on the median for ages 50 and over. However, there was also an increase observed in the control area.

There were no sustained periods starting during the analysis period where the weekly proportion of early stage colorectal, kidney, oesophageal, pancreatic or stomach cancers was higher than the median for October 2016 to September 2017 for persons aged 50 and over or for all ages combined.

Conclusions

There were no sustained periods where the proportion of abdominal cancers diagnosed at an early stage, was equal to or higher than the median for October 2016 to September 2017, for persons aged 50 years and over, and for all ages combined. There was therefore no evidence to suggest the regional abdominal symptoms had an impact on the proportion of abdominal cancers diagnosed at an early stage.

There was a sustained period where the proportion of ovarian cancers diagnosed at an early stage was equal to or higher than the median for October 2016 to September 2017, for women aged 50 years and over in both the campaign and control areas. There was therefore no clear evidence to suggest whether or not the campaign had an impact on the proportion of ovarian cancers diagnosed at an early stage.

Other metrics being evaluated include GP attendance, urgent GP referrals, conversion and detection rates, and emergency presentations.

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.

The proportion of staged cancers for the Be Clear on Cancer (BCoC) metric summaries was calculated using denominators which excluded cancers with unknown stage. Other National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service (NCRAS) outputs on proportion of staged cancers include cancers with unknown stage in the denominator. Therefore, the proportions of staged cancers reported in the BCoC metrics are different to other NCRAS publications. Excluding cancers with unknown stage ensures greater comparability across years for the BCoC metrics, as the proportion of cancers with a completed stage has increased since 2014.

Where the results are statistically significant there is some evidence for an impact of the campaign, although underlying trends and other external factors (for example 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 (for example symptom awareness and GP attendance with relevant symptoms) and use of the healthcare system (for example urgent GP referrals for

suspected cancer), compared to disease metrics (for example incidence and stage at diagnosis).

Find out more about Be Clear on Cancer at:

www.ncin.org.uk/be_clear_on_cancer

www.nhs.uk/be-clear-on-cancer