



Patient Participation Group

Report of virtual meeting 12.12.2024

Topic: Uptake of screening

Why we are talking about screening

Abhi (practice manager) revealed that uptake of national screening programmes is below ideal levels.

It means a significant proportion of patients may have undetected problems.

What screening means

Dr Athee explained screening is carrying out tests on people without symptoms, to look for problems in the early stages. This allows better chance to prevent it worsening or even to cure it.

Currently the national screening programmes are:

Among adults:

- Abdominal aorta aneurysm
- Bowel cancer
- Breast cancer
- Cervical cancer
- Diabetic eye disease

During pregnancy (antenatal):

- Blood haemoglobinopathy
- Foetal abnormality
- Infectious disease

In newborn:

- Hearing
- Heel prick blood sample
- Physical development check

How screening benefits

Dhurata (nurse) quoted statistics from Cancer Research UK:

Over the past 5 years,

Breast cancer screening detected 62,000 cases

Bowel cancer screening detected 22,800 cases

Cervical cancer screening detected 4,000 cases

Why we do not screen for everything

Dr Steve (medical science teacher) explained that we consider certain factors before we start screening.

Accuracy

The test must be responsive enough to pick up most abnormal cases and not miss too many (scientists call this “sensitive”).

It must also not be over responsive that it picks up normal cases (scientists call this “specific”).

Usefulness

The problem should be a serious one, and also be reasonably common.

It is worth screening for if we can do something to prevent it getting worse.

Practicality

The test must be easy to do.

It should also not cost the earth.

Some of these factors explain why we do not routinely screen for prostate cancer. The test is just not accurate enough.

Conclusion

We encourage our patients to take up all screening programmes. If you are worried about discomfort or embarrassment, you are welcome to talk about it with the nurse or any doctor.

Finally, if you have missed any of your screening invitations, you can ask us to re-arrange it.

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