How do Primary Care factors influence the speed of cancer diagnosis?

Michael Harris
Department for Health
GPs in the NHS

• 90% of NHS consultations are in primary care

• Physical, psychological and social approach

• “Gatekeepers” to specialist care
NHS comes top in healthcare survey

Study by Washington-based foundation puts healthcare provision in the US at the bottom of its report
NHS: UK now has one of the worst healthcare systems in the developed world, according to OECD report

Hospitals so underequipped that people are dying needlessly because of a chronic lack of investment

Paul Gallagher  |  @PMGallagher1  |  13 hours ago  |  45 comments
Why is our cancer survival so poor?

• Vedsted, Olesen 2011
  — “Healthcare systems with a gate-keeper system have a significantly lower 1-year relative cancer survival than systems without such gate-keeper functions
  — “with an absolute difference of 5–7%.”
• Why?
• Why does the system that I’m so proud of lead to early deaths from cancer?
Cancer survival rates in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1-year relative survival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best: Sweden</td>
<td>80.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Europe</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
<td>76.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European average</td>
<td>72.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>72.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>66.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>65.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worst: Bulgaria</td>
<td>59.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cancer survival

• David Cameron:
  – “If we had cancer survival rates at the average in Europe, we’d save 5,000 lives a year.”
1-year cancer survival rates

• What is it about our own health system that leads to such poor cancer survival rates?
• What is it about European health systems that lead to such large variations in cancer survival rates?
1-year cancer survival rates

• Linked to speed of diagnosis

• Diagnostic delay may be due to
  – patient factors (e.g. delayed presentation to Dr)
  – doctor factors (e.g. delayed referral or investigation)
  – waiting lists (for investigation, appointments, treatment)
Observation of GPs in six European countries

• Watched consultations
  – live
  – virtual
• Noticed wide variations in thinking and action depending on health systems
How do health system differences affect cancer survival rates?

• EU grant to run exploratory workshop
  – the “Örenäs Research Group”
The Örenäis Research Group

• *Lead:* University of Bath
• *Members:*
  • Belgium
  • Bulgaria
  • Croatia
  • Denmark
  • England
    – UBHT, Bristol
    – University of the West of England
  • France
  • Germany x2
  • Greece
  • Israel
  • Italy
  • Netherlands
  • Norway
  • Poland x2
  • Portugal
  • Romania
  • Scotland
  • Slovenia
  • Spain x2
  • Sweden
  • Switzerland
The Örenäs Research Group

- Meets every 6 months
- First and second studies completed
- Third study underway
Study 1: Non-clinical factors that might affect GPs’ referral decision-making

• Expert group symposium (Barcelona 2014)
• 50 system factors identified, including:
  – levels of gatekeeping responsibility
  – funding systems
  – access to special investigations
  – fear of litigation
  – relationships with specialist colleagues.
Study 2: Where do European patients who may have cancer present?

• Case-based questionnaire
  – 4 patient vignettes
  – consensus groups from sixteen countries
  – where are these patients likely to present?

• How does that correlate with 1-year cancer survival rates?
Study 2: Where do European patients who may have cancer present?

• No correlation between initial consultation with a GP and poorer cancer survival
  – but case-by-case variation

• So, the reasons for the association between the GP-as-gatekeeper function and poorer cancer survival are likely to be complex.
Study 3: What system factors affect GPs’ decisions to refer for further investigation?

• On-line survey of GPs in European countries
• Four patient vignettes:
  – “What would you do today?”
• List of 20 system factors that may have affected those referral decisions
Study 3: What system factors affect GPs’ decisions to refer for further investigation?

• Example of vignette
Study 3: What system factors affect GPs’ decisions to refer for further investigation?

• Example of vignette
  – Alexander is 62 years old. He has had a respiratory tract infection for two weeks, with increased sputum production and increased use of his salbutamol inhaler.
  – He had COPD diagnosed by spirometry 2 years ago. There is no other relevant past medical history.
  – He smokes 20 cigarettes a day and has done for over 40 years.
  – There are no significant findings on physical examination and he is not acutely unwell.
  – What would you do AT THIS CONSULTATION?
Study 3: What system factors affect GPs’ decisions to refer for further investigation?

• Examples of system factors
  – The local health system encourages us to refer any patients with possible cancer early, even if there is a low risk of cancer.
  – I am able to refer to a specialist that I know personally.
  – Referring or not referring doesn't affect me at all financially.
  – I am usually very busy, so I sometimes refer to help reduce my workload.
  – Strongly disagree ... Disagree ... Neutral ... Agree ... Strongly agree
Study 3: What system factors affect GPs’ decisions to refer for further investigation?

• 20 clinical/academic centres in 17 European countries are taking part
• Survey translations validated by back-translation
• Survey respondents: at least 50 primary care clinicians per centre
Въпросник на група Оренас за общопрактикуващи лекари в България

въведение

Благодаря Ви, че се включвате в проучване за лекари в първичната медицинска помощ

Проучването е организирано от изследователската група Оренас, обширна европейска група от семейни лекари, които се интересуват от изследвания на факторите, които повлияват начина, по които се управлява пациента в общата практика.

Ще Ви отнеме 15 минути да попълните проучването.

Вашите отговори са конфиденциални и няма да бъдете питан за имо или детайли за контакт.

Ако сте съгласен да участвате, моля натиснете „Следващ” по долу.

С благодарност,

Гергана Форева, Медицински Университетите Пловдив
Introduction

Thank you for taking part in this survey for primary care doctors.

The survey has been organised by the Örenäs Research Group, a Europe-wide group of family doctors who are interested in researching the factors that affect the way patients are managed in primary care.

The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Your answers are confidential and we do not ask for your name or any contact details.

If you are happy to take the survey, please click on the "Next" link below.

Many thanks,
Michael Harris MB BS FRCGP, University of Bath
Study 3: What system factors affect GPs’ decisions to refer for further investigation?

• Analysis:
  – How do system factors correlate with GPs’ referral decisions?
  – How do these correlate with 1-year cancer survival?
Örenäs Research Group: future work

• Systems analysis
  – look for correlations between healthcare system characteristics and cancer outcomes
Örenäs Research Group: future work

• Qualitative research – possible approaches:
  – semi-structured interviews;
  – interviews around consultations with simulated patients;
  – observation of consultations with real patients
Örenäs Research Group: future work

- Horizon 2020 application
Questions?