

CLAHRC BITE

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A bite-sized summary of a piece of CLAHRC research



What?

CLAHRC researchers conducted a systematic review of the scientific literature to examine the attitudes and preferences of the general public, health care professionals, people with dementia and their carers, towards screening for dementia.

Who?

As the UK population becomes older the risk of developing dementia increases. The Department of Health estimates that 45% of patients who might meet the criteria for dementia do not receive a formal diagnosis or receive it too late to be clinically useful.

Why?

Systematic population-level screening (a process of identifying a condition amongst a population of apparently healthy individuals) has been suggested as a possible process to enable early detection of dementia in people who may be at increased risk.

**A systematic review of screening
for dementia**

Our findings suggest that screening for dementia raises complex issues around preference and choice for clinicians and the public; it is unclear what specific factors promote or reduce screening acceptance the most.

Evidence suggests that population screening for dementia may not be acceptable to either the general public or health care professionals, and highlights where focused efforts are needed to gain insights into specific screening issues. However, the published literature on attitudes towards population screening for dementia is diverse and fragmented and therefore it is difficult to draw clear conclusions. The quality of evidence is also low, and there are few large-scale studies that have been undertaken. The conclusion of the study was to recommend that policy makers be cautious about the adoption of population screening for dementia without evidence and careful evaluation of benefits and risks.

In 2014 the UK National Screening Committee put out a report on dementia screening for consultation. The research team provided comments on the acceptability of such a programme based on the findings of the systematic review. In January 2015 the NSC maintained its position that systematic population screening programme for dementia was not recommended.

By providing reliable and user-focused evidence to inform practice, policy and research with regard to the effects, acceptability and added-value of dementia screening, this project furthered our understanding of how to improve early detection of dementia in the community, irrespective of the extent to which the benefits of dementia screening are established.

References

Two papers have been prepared; one has been accepted by BMC Geriatrics:

Martin S, Fleming J, Cullum S, Denning T, Rait G, Fox C, Katona C, Brayne C and LaFortune L. Exploring attitudes and preferences for dementia screening: carer and public involvement contributions. BMC Geriatrics

Martin S, Kelly S, Khan A, Cullum S, Denning T, Rait G, Fox C, Katona C, Cosco T, Brayne C and LaFortune L. Attitudes and preferences towards screening for dementia: a systematic review of the literature. BMC Geriatrics

What is NIHR CLAHRC East of England?

The National Institute for Health Research Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) East of England is a five year programme of applied health and social care research which focuses on the needs of people with complex problems, often vulnerable, when multiple agencies are involved in their care: young people, frail older people, those with dementia, learning disabilities, acquired brain injuries or mental ill health.

The CLAHRC East of England collaboration encompasses some thirty-six organisations, with research hubs in the Universities of Cambridge, Hertfordshire and East Anglia working closely with individuals and organisations involved in the whole care pathway.

Service users and carers are at the heart of what we do, in parallel with an ambitious public health research programme. Co-production and collaboration at all stages of the research process are fundamental to making a positive impact through applied health research.

Read more about this study on our website

<http://www.clahrc-ee.nihr.ac.uk/2015/05/a-systematic-review-of-screening-for-dementia/>

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