Quality Improvement in the Early Diagnosis of Cancer – End of Programme Report

‘Quality Improvement in the Early Diagnosis of Cancer’ was an RCGP pilot programme for 2015-16.

Executive Summary

The Early Diagnosis of Cancer and Quality Improvement Project was delivered by the RCGP with funding support from NHS England and Macmillan Cancer Support to support the early diagnosis of cancer using significant event analysis (SEA) and other quality improvement (QI) tools.

The project aimed to capture learning from the analysis of cancer SEAs - identifying key themes demonstrating good practice, barriers and enablers, and specific areas for quality improvement to benefit patients. Two GP learning events were held over October 2015 in Birmingham and Gloucestershire, these looked at local SEA findings and other work on safety netting and clinical decision support tools and cancer risk assessment tools.

Macmillan GP leadership was key to maximising GP engagement and participation. NHS Gloucestershire CCG's Macmillan GP was instrumental in recruiting GPs across their area. Recruitment of GPs and Appraisers and Trainers across the Birmingham Cross City CCG area proved challenging due to the lack of a developed cancer strategy in the area. The RCGP countered this by opening up the events Birmingham-wide. The project aimed to analyse post-training SEAs and delivered follow-up ‘train the trainers’ events aimed at practice leads, GP trainers and Programme Directors over January and February 2016.

The significant output of the programme is the Early Diagnosis of Cancer Significant Event Analysis Toolkit1 - which includes a standalone guide on Cancer specific SEA for GPs, the Significant Event Analysis GP Guide2 – the toolkit was launched on the 01 August 2016 to support CCG or cancer leads, practice GP leads or any GP in a practice delivering training to deliver localised schemes to align with the cancer strategy and embed their use alongside safety netting and risk assessment tools to improve patient outcomes in the early diagnosis of cancer.

Background

NHS England contracted RCGP to deliver the early diagnosis of cancer project. This contract originated from the Quality Surveillance Team (formerly the Peer Review team) at NHS England with a timetable of 31 March 2015 to March 2016. Additional

2 http://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/toolkits/~media/623A9E345A78422BBD79EE9920318CB6.ashx
funding was received from Macmillan Cancer Support to support Clinical Lead on the programme.

In 2015 NHS England approached the RCGP to undertake an innovative project supporting Peer Review in Cancer Significant Event Analysis (SEA). In March 2015 NHS England and RCGP agreed an MOU with a list of seven high level deliverables. 

*The National Cancer Strategy*³ (published in 2015) contains 96 recommendations to be implemented by 2020. A key part of the strategy includes reducing emergency presentations of a new diagnosis and deciphering whether there are specific avoidable contributors; currently just over 20% of all cancers in England present by this route. Such diagnoses represent a learning opportunity for all. The strategy therefore made a specific recommendation that GPs should be required to undertake an SEA for any patient diagnosed with cancer as a result of an emergency admission.

RCGP has been involved in supporting Significant Event Analysis under its quality improvement work stream. This is an important and practical quality improvement tool that can be widely used across Primary Care to document and provide learnings from significant events such as cancer diagnosis. The RCGP developed an SEA template to support improved reporting and reflection in SEAs. RCGP partners Macmillan also held an event in September 2014 to train appraisers to effectively appraise Cancer Significant Event Audits in a way that supports quality improvement in patient care. This project built on and was complementary to that activity, other relevant work such as safety netting and Risk Assessment Tools were used as context for this project.

**Beneficiaries**

The project delivered peer-learning events, facilitated to create a non-threatening, non-judgemental environment where GPs felt comfortable to reflect openly and share their experiences, but able also to encourage debate and challenge colleagues in a professional manner when improvement(s) from a SEA were identified. The ethos of the project was to share good practice in efforts to drive improvements at practice and CCG level. The resources contained in the *Early Diagnosis of Cancer Significant Event Analysis Toolkit* are intended to address this need and to provide guidance for CCG or cancer leads, practice GP leads, or any GP in a practice delivering training to inspire and encourage GPs by demonstrating the worth of a high quality cancer SEA.

During the programme the RCGP has promoted this to many thousands of primary care professionals through the following channels:

3 articles in February edition of the RCGP’s Clinical News e-newsletter – approx. reach 48,000 RCGP members

Promotion of the toolkit, guide, peer-learning events in RCGP Chair’s update – approx. reach 50,000

Promotion through RCGP social media channels

Promotion to CCG contacts.

77 delegates attended peer-learning events aimed at GPs, and 59 delegates attended follow-up Train the Trainer events aimed at GP appraisers and trainers.

*Early Diagnosis of Cancer Significant Event Analysis Toolkit* and standalone *Significant Event Analysis GP Guide* were launched in early August 2016 and hosted on the RCGP website⁴.

**Methodology**

Following CCG recruitment and interviews NHS Gloucestershire CCG and Birmingham Cross City CCG were selected as sites. Gloucestershire was selected for demonstrating strong local leadership and were already collecting cancer SEAs. Birmingham Cross City was selected as it was a large urban area and had not done significant work in the area of cancer SEAs. Therefore two selected CCGs would present significant contrasts.

Two rounds of SEAs were to be gathered from programme participants, and SEA reviewers were recruited to assist in this process. Across both CCG areas these proved difficult to encourage. This was especially difficult in Birmingham Cross City CCG due to a lack of a local cancer offer and strong CCG leadership in the area. SEA analysis feeding into the training events and outputs was undertaken by the clinical lead.

GP learning events on Early diagnosis of Cancer and effective use of SEAs, Safety netting and Risk Assessment Tools were developed and delivered in October 2015 in Gloucestershire and Birmingham.

- The NHS Gloucestershire CCG event attracted 45 delegates.
- The Birmingham event attracted 32 delegates.

Evaluations were gathered at each event.

Follow on Train the Trainer events aimed at GP appraisers and trainers were held in Gloucestershire and Birmingham in early 2016. The RCGP Quality Improvement clinical lead had input into these training events and co-delivered at the Birmingham session.

- The NHS Gloucestershire CCG event attracted 28 delegates.

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• The Birmingham event attracted 31 delegates.

Evaluations were again gathered from participants attending these events.

The production of the programme output, the *Early Diagnosis of Cancer Significant Event Analysis Toolkit* (incorporating a separate *Significant Event Analysis GP Guide*) was delayed beyond the intended endpoint of the programme. Draft outputs were prepared for review by steering group members over July 2016. The final toolkit and guide was launched on the 1st of August 2016.

Initial CIRC promotion of the Toolkit and Guide used College social media (tweets scheduled throughout August 2016), the College Chair’s blog (issued to all members), and CCG contacts.

**Measureable difference**

Evaluations of the October 2015 GP learning events asked delegates about their understanding of how to complete a high quality cancer SEA before and after the event:

- 80% of participants at the Gloucester event and 77% of participants at the Birmingham event indicated an increase in confidence following the session
- 20% of participants at the Gloucester event and 23% of participants at the Birmingham event indicated no change.

When asked about their understanding of quality improvement tools before and after the event:

- 75% of participants at the Gloucester event and 80% of participants at the Birmingham event indicated an increase in confidence following the session
- 25% of participants at the Gloucester event and 20% of participants at the Birmingham event indicated no change.

Evaluations of the 2016 Appraiser/Trainer events also asked delegates about their understanding of how to complete a high quality cancer SEA before and after the event:

- 55% of participants at the Gloucester event and 80% of participants at the Birmingham event indicated an increase in confidence following the session
- 45% of participants at the Gloucester event and 20% of participants at the Birmingham event indicated no change.

When asked about their understanding of quality improvement tools before and after the event:

- 75% of participants at the Gloucester event and 80% of participants at the Birmingham event indicated an increase in confidence following the session
• 25% of participants at the Gloucester event and 20% of participants at the Birmingham event indicated no change.

Supporting information
In December 2015 the RCGP hosted Macmillan’s second pan-London cancer SEA event widening the net and including secondary care consultants alongside GP trainers and appraisers to enrich the discussion and improve communication across the primary and secondary care interface. It was agreed by the attendees that cancer SEAs are an essential part of appraisal and revalidation as they are a learning resource for not only individuals but also practice teams and hospital trusts.

Legacy
Ongoing CIRC will continue to promote the toolkit through Cancer Clinical Priority work and by links between programme toolkits. CIRC will monitor upcoming awareness weeks for relevant activities outside of the College which can be used to ‘piggy-back’ messages across our programmes and legacy toolkits.