

Transforming Cancer Pathways: Supporting Earlier Identification

One in two people are diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime

Breast, prostate, lung and bowel are the top four most common cancers in the UK, causing over 45% of deaths from the disease. Each year, 4 in 10 cases of cancer could be prevented, and death rates are higher in deprived areas. The biggest causes of cancer are lifestyle factors including smoking, diet, weight, and obesity.

In the UK, bowel cancer accounts for 11% of all new cancer cases (which is approximately 42,000 new cases per year)¹, representing a cost to the economy of £1.74 billion.²

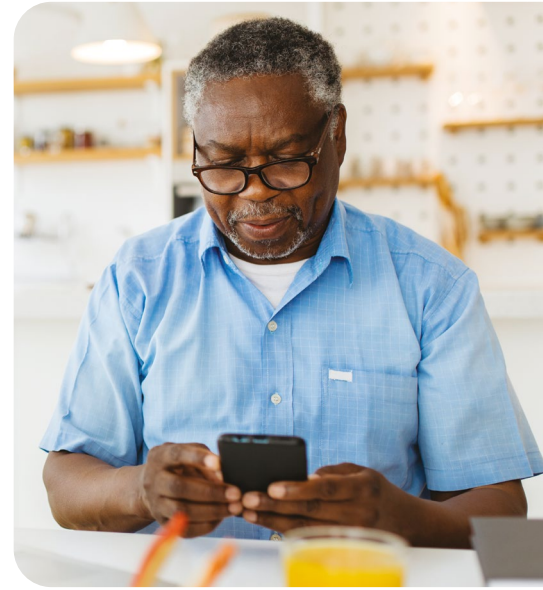
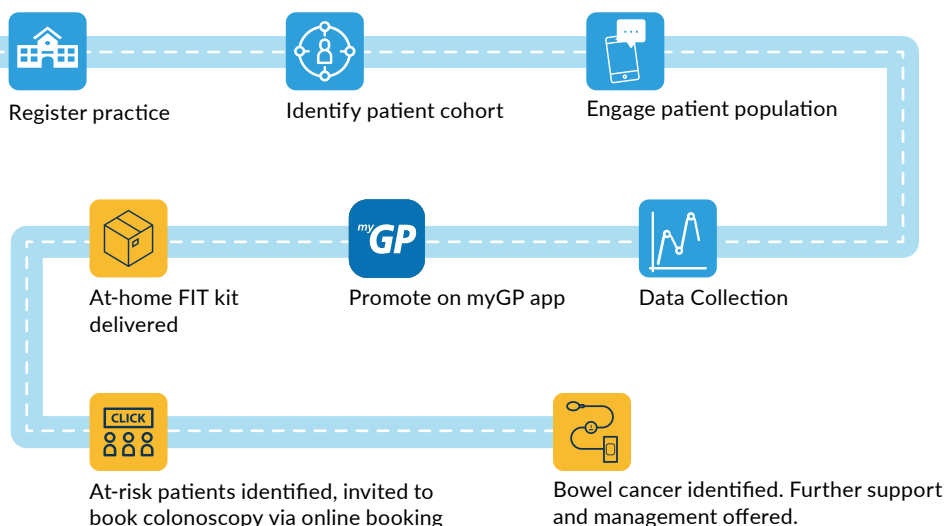
There are approximately 46 deaths from bowel cancer every day.³ Through routine screening and earlier diagnosis, 54% of bowel cancer cases in the UK are preventable.⁴

Earlier screening and diagnosis

The NHS now distributes free Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) kits to people aged 50 to 74 in England who are registered with a GP practice. Increased FIT kit completion promotes earlier detection of bowel cancer at stages 1-2 rather than 3-4, supporting better health outcomes and lower treatment costs.⁵

Some patient groups have persistently lower uptake than the rest of the population; these include non-white people, those for whom English isn't their first language, people with a severe mental health condition, and those with learning disabilities.

With a national target of 75%, the pre-covid return rate of FIT kits in South East London was 56%. In partnership with South East Cancer Alliance, iPLATO is working to improve bowel cancer screening rates across the area.



“Screening is a vital public health strategy for the early identification of cancers because it enables more timely access to treatment which can improve clinical outcomes and survival. We believe this work will be relevant in other parts of the country and for other screening programmes.”

explains Huma's cancer lead and oncologist, Dr Simon Chowdhury

Evidence

- SMS reminder programme increased bowel cancer screening uptake by 16%
- Data collection through digital Patient Questionnaires average response rate of 14%

References

1. Cancer Research UK, Bowel cancer statistics, (Accessed: 11 May 2023).
2. Bowel Cancer UK, Bowel cancer costs the UK £1.74 billion a year, (Accessed: 11 May 2023).
3. Bowel Cancer UK, Bowel cancer costs the UK £1.74 billion a year, (Accessed: 11 May 2023).
4. Cancer Research UK, Bowel cancer statistics, (Accessed: 11 May 2023).
5. York Health Economics Consortium, Accelerating early identification of cancer in primary care using an artificial intelligence driven solution, (Accessed: 11 May 2023).

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