Increasing uptake of NHS Health Checks - Exploring patients’ views of the Health Check programme

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Background

**NHS Health Checks**

- National programme started in 2011
- Healthy adults aged *40 to 74 years* - Invited for NHS Health Check.
- Invitation every 5 years
- Check includes assessment for risk of:
  - **Heart disease**
  - **Stroke**
  - **Kidney disease**
  - **Diabetes**
- Involves evaluation of blood pressure, cholesterol, smoking, BMI, physical activity, and alcohol intake.
NHS Health Check uptake

- Programme could prevent **2000 deaths and 9500** non-fatal myocardial infarctions and strokes each year

- However…..Uptake **considerably lower than expected**
  - Department of Health **economic model assumes 75% uptake**
  - Nationally uptake: 52% (invitation and opportunistic checks)
  - 80% of all CCG’s uptake rates below target.
  - **Uptake in South London low: 20-40%**

- **Understanding of patient’s views towards NHS Health Checks vital in developing interventions to increase uptake.**
Context of research programme

• Increasing uptake
  – Intervention RCT
  – Includes: Patients views and practice staff views

In addition:
• Evaluation of clinical outcomes of Health Checks
• Patient views of adhering to advice given during Health Checks
• Investigating patients diagnosed as high-risk during Health Check
Aims

• Qualitative study nested within an RCT

• RCT evaluating use of the ‘question behaviour effect questionnaire’ (QBE) to increase uptake of NHS Health Checks

Qualitative study aim:

• To investigate patient’s views and beliefs relating to NHS Health Checks.
Methods

Participants
• 350 patients due to receive an invitation for a Health Check
• 18 GP practices in Lambeth and Lewisham.

Materials
• Question behaviour effect (QBE) questionnaire (*included text box for qualitative study)
• Sent one week before patients receive the standard invitation to attend NHS Health Check
QBE Questionnaire

1. Summary of NHS Health Check
   • Explains patient will soon receive invitation to attend

2. Series of tick box questions
   • Eliciting emotions relating to attending health check when invited

   • *1/2 participants offered a £5 voucher for returning questionnaire
   • Response rate 20%
Analysis

- Inductive thematic analysis of all text responses (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

- Aimed to investigated views and beliefs relating to NHS Health Checks

- Analysis revealed that:
  - **Views on NHS Health Checks** and **need to attend a check** related to beliefs surrounding 5 themes...
Views of Health Check and need to attend related to 5 themes -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current state of health</td>
<td>Health concerns vs Check not required if healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards Health Check programme</td>
<td>Limited benefit vs Positive for health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current utilisation of care</td>
<td>Regular GP visits or Private health checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to accessing programme</td>
<td>e.g. Flexible appointment times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards pharmacy-conducted Checks</td>
<td>Uncertainty of pharmacist advice vs Convenient option</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Current state of Health

• ‘Health concerns’
  – Positive and likely to attend

  “Due to having two stomach bags on my stomach and a pin on my shoulder I am in constant pain and discomfort and would like to know if anything else is wrong with me” (P4)

  “At my age 75 years I am very grateful to NHS and I do feel some things are not 100% at the moment so I welcome this opportunity” (P2)

• Vs. ‘Check not required if healthy’
  - Feel no need to attend
Current utilisation of care

• ‘Regular GP visits or private Health Checks’
  – NHS Health check not needed

  “Due to having prostate cancer I am already checked every 10 weeks” (P3)

  “I receive check ups via private health insurance and therefore would be unlikely to attend the NHS one” (P8)
Attitudes towards Health Check programme

- **Limited Benefit**
- Not worth attending
  “Health checks are a snapshot in time so I'm sure they are not very useful” (P08)

- **Positive for health**
- Likely to attend
  “An important service which I am glad to have the opportunity to use” (P03)

“I think that the job of offering free health checks is great because that way many problems would be prevented” (P39)
Discussion

- Identified key beliefs surrounding patients view of NHS Health Checks and need to attend

- Main finding: **Lack of understanding** of NHS Health Check programme and content

- Many patients **incorrectly believe:**
  - Any health problem will be discussed in Check
  - No need to attend if not experiencing any symptoms
  - Regular GP visits provide similar health assessments
  - Health Checks offer no benefit to patient
Implications

- **Interventions** to increase Health Check uptake could benefit from increasing **awareness** that:
  
  - Need to attend even in **absence of present symptoms**
  - **GP consultations do not provide similar assessments**
  - **Potential benefits of attending a Health Check** (e.g. referral to local services etc)

- In addition... addressing **practical barriers** (e.g. flexible appointments) may help increase attendance

- Study continues: trial end Dec 2014 (11,490 participants)
Co-applicants / collaborators / researchers

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