

## **Local developments – improving the uptake of bowel cancer screening**

In partnership with Wessex Strategic Clinical Network, Macmillan GPs in Hampshire have been successful in a bid to the National Awareness and Early Detection Initiative (NAEDI) to improve the uptake of bowel cancer screening in Dorset, Hampshire and on the Isle of Wight.

Practices with an uptake of less than 55% are incentivised to take part, with 36 eligible practices from a total of 300 practices in Wessex. Working closely with the regional bowel cancer screening hub in Guildford, participating practices receive an initial visit by a Macmillan GP to share effectiveness of the screening, explain the pilot and create an opportunity to discuss their practice cancer profile.

Following the visit, the hub will send the practice a list of patients who have not responded to an invitation to take part in the screening. The GPs will then review the list for their practice. Patients receiving end of life care, regular colonoscopic surveillance or with a recent diagnosis of bowel cancer can be excluded from further follow up.

After review, the hub will send a letter to each patient, and another letter which is endorsed by their GP, to stress the importance of screening. GP endorsed letters in other pilots have shown to be effective and this pilot is to test whether this is a viable option to extend across a larger population. Patients can use the original screening pack they were sent, or contact the hub to request another. All screening kits are individually bar-coded allowing close scrutiny and analysis of data.

Analysis of the first six years of national data shows that:

- 76% of patients diagnosed via screening have either Dukes' A or B with a survival rate of 93% and 76% at five years respectively.
- Dukes' C and D carry a 48% and 7% 5 year survival rate.
- In contrast with other national screening programmes the bowel cancer screening programme includes polypectomy and thus includes cancer prevention.
- Over the first 6 years covering three two-year cycles the prevalence of bowel cancer has dropped from 9%, to 7% and 6%.

The pilot project team is delighted with the support received from the regional screening hub and the opportunity to work across several NHS organisations including Public Health England and Macmillan GPs. The response from participating practices has been very supportive and the team appreciates this opportunity for peer-to-peer education. Hopefully all the effort will inspire patients to return their screening kit and increase early detection.

**Written by the Hampshire Macmillan GPs.**