

INFORMATION SHEET

Improving Patient Experience in Primary Care: Practice information

We would like to invite the practice to join a project within the Improve Study, which has been set up by the University of Cambridge and the University of Exeter Medical School.

We are carrying out a study of around 500 patients to look at how doctors communicate with patients during a consultation, and how this is best captured in a questionnaire. Our goal is to understand in greater detail how patients use questionnaires to report experience of GP care, and to explore approaches to using patient surveys to improve reported experience.

Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the study is being conducted and what is involved. Please take the time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish.

If anything is not clear, or if you would like more information, please contact a member of our study team (see end for details).

WHY IS THE STUDY NEEDED?

Thank you for taking time to consider taking part in the IMPROVE study.

As you know, patient surveys are increasingly being used to evaluate NHS care. We would like to explore how well surveys actually measure what goes on in GP consultations. To do this, we plan to video record consultations between patients and GPs. After the consultation, we will ask both the doctor and the patient to complete a very short questionnaire. We will also ask external GPs, experienced in communication training and assessment, to confidentially view the videos of a small number of recorded consultations and evaluate these. Finally, we plan to interview a small number of patients to talk through in much more detail their experience of the recorded consultation and how they chose their answers on the questionnaire. We will then use these data sources to explore different perspectives on the consultation, and the implications of this for the use of patient questionnaires as an evaluation and feedback tool.



WHAT DOES TAKING PART INVOLVE?

Taking part in the IMPROVE study would involve agreeing the following:

- A small number of consultations with each participating GP to be video recorded (for example, one morning surgery per GP)
- Researchers to be present at your practice during each recorded surgery to recruit patients to the study, and to hand out questionnaires to individual patients following their consultation. Some assistance from receptionists in alerting patients to the presence of the research team is helpful.
- Participating GPs to complete a very short (seven tick box) questionnaire following each recorded consultation, taking less than a minute

WHY HAVE WE BEEN INVITED?

We intend to recruit up to 15 practices to take part in this study from two geographical areas: East Anglia & North London and Bristol & the South West. Practices' previous GPPS results (doctor-patient communication and patient choice items) will inform our sampling frame.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

Taking part will provide individuals and practices with the information necessary for identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. For all participant GPs, we will provide access to their videoed consultations and a summary report of their own responses to the questionnaire. We suggest a range of potential activities aimed at improving consulting skills, based on participation in this study, to enable participating GPs to claim 4, 6 or 8 hours of CPD credits.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES?

We do not foresee major risks from participating in this study, although we do understand that some GPs may be unfamiliar with having their consultations video recorded. Participants are under no pressure to take part and are free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. If you feel that a patient may be at risk of harm or a confidentiality breach, the doctor is free to stop recording and withdraw this patient from the research. Patients can also ask for the video recorder to be turned off at any point in a consultation.



HOW WILL INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

We will protect GPs' and patients' privacy at all times. The steps taken to ensure confidentiality are stated below.

- Participants' consent to take part in the study will be recorded on a form that will contain identifiers including their name. These forms will be stored in a secure location and separately from the study data.
- Participants' data will be stored using a unique, anonymous study identification number
- A single table linking anonymous study identification numbers to contact details will be stored on a separate password protected location which may be accessed by the members of the study team only.
- All study data will be stored in a restricted-access, study computer folder and database. The study data will be linked to participants' study identification number, but patients' personal details (surname, first name, date of birth, address) will never appear in this folder or database. Access to the study data (video recorded consultations and questionnaire responses) will be password protected and will be used only by named researchers working on this study under the direct supervision of the senior investigators.
- At no time will GPs know patients' questionnaire responses, or vice versa
- All handling, storage and disposal of data will be compliant with the Data Protection Act of 1998.
- In the unlikely event information suggests there may have been a breach of professional conduct or harm to patients, the relevant bodies will be informed.

WHO IS ORGANISING AND FUNDING THIS STUDY?

The study is organised by the University of Cambridge and the University of Exeter Medical School. The study is funded by the Department of Health. This project has been reviewed and was given a favourable review by the Hertfordshire Research Ethics Committee.

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