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To:

All Trust Chief Executives
All Primary Care Trust Chief Executives

Copied to:

NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executives
Cancer Network Directors
Strategic Health Authority Cancer Leads
Strategic Health Authority Directors of Performance

Dear Colleague

Be Clear on Cancer – update on activity

Following my [letter of 12 July](#) about this year's plans for cancer early diagnosis campaign activity and the launch of the 'reminder' campaign on bowel cancer (28 August), I thought that I could usefully send you a brief update.

National 'reminder' bowel cancer symptom awareness campaign

Just to recap:

- the bowel campaign will consist of TV, radio, press advertisements and over 100 events across England.
- the reminder campaign will run until the end of September and will have a lower weight of TV advertising than the previous national campaign.
- the key messages will remain the same – if you have had 'looser poo' or 'blood in poo' for three weeks or more, your doctor wants to know.
- we recognise that the timescale promoted to the public is earlier than the NICE Guidelines for urgent GP referrals for suspected bowel cancer, which state six weeks. We want to ensure that people with potentially serious symptoms go and see their GP promptly. GPs should of course exercise their clinical judgement about the appropriate handling for the individual patient. Not every patient will need to be referred on the urgent referral pathway for suspected bowel cancer and the great

majority of those presenting may have other conditions that will require health care interventions.

- we are keen to understand more about how we amplify and sustain activity and so three areas in England will pilot bowel campaign extensions through until March 2013. One pilot will use paid for media - the Yorkshire TV region will host this - whilst in the North West and parts of London we are piloting a community-based approach. With all the extension work, there will be a break from 23 November until 7 January to prevent additional pressures over Christmas and the New Year.

Update on the results from previous national bowel campaign activity

I reported in my previous letter preliminary results for the bowel campaign in January to March this year. We now have additional results:

- there was a statistically significant increase in unprompted awareness of blood in stools (27% to 42%) and loose bowel motions (10% to 23%) of symptoms of bowel cancer.
- there was an increase in presentations to GPs. Interim analysis of GP attendance data reports a 30% increase in attendances amongst patients over 50 reporting key campaign-related symptoms of rectal bleeding, change in bowel habit and/or loose stools. This was an average of 0.4 additional visits per practice per week.
- there was an increase in urgent referrals to hospitals compared to the same period in the previous year, and more than 85% of referrals in February – March 2012 were in those aged 50 or over. Increases in referrals were greater for men than for women, though the absolute number of men referred urgently for suspected lower GI was still less than the number of women. Having further assessed the figures, the increase in two week wait referrals in East of England was 27.8%, not the figure of 48% that was previously quoted. Apologies for this error.

In the coming months, we will get further evaluation results, including an estimate of the number of polyps removed, cancers diagnosed and stage at diagnosis.

Support for the bowel campaign activity

A series of briefing sheets about the bowel campaign have been produced for GPs, practice teams, pharmacy teams and service providers, which can all be viewed at the [NAEDI website](#). These signpost to relevant tools and further information too. Cancer Networks will be keeping local GPs and practice staff informed about the progress and implementation of the campaign. In addition, we have produced a [slide pack](#) about the bowel campaign and its likely impact, particularly on endoscopy services.

NHS Improvement is also running a programme to support the NHS in improving its endoscopy productivity. For more information about this, contact Fiona Thow, Director, NHS Improvement (Fiona.Thow@improvement.nhs.uk)

Other activity

As I set out previously, we are also running a number of regional and local pilots to raise awareness of the symptoms of other cancers. These regional and local activities will run from January – March 2013. Details of the pilot locations are attached (see Annex A).

If you have any queries, please contact Karen Iles in the DH Cancer Policy Team (karen.iles@dh.gsi.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Richards', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Sir Mike Richards

National Cancer Director

**2012-13 Department of Health cancer symptoms
public awareness campaigns**

Bowel Cancer Awareness Campaign – National (28 August – end September)	
Bowel extension 1 – Community engagement (28 August – mid-March 2013)	
Lancs and South Cumbria	Network led community engagement
Greater Manchester and Cheshire	Network led community engagement
Merseyside and Cheshire	Network led community engagement
Bowel extension 2 – Community engagement (28 August - mid-March 2013)	
North East London	Network led community engagement
North Central London	Network led community engagement
Bowel media extension (28 August – mid-March 2013)	
Yorkshire Cancer Network	DH Media / PR only
North East Yorkshire and Humber Clinical alliance	DH Media / PR only
North Trent	DH Media / PR only
OVARIAN (Jan – mid-March 2013) – NO TV	
Anglia Cancer Network	DH Media / PR only
Essex Cancer Network	DH Media / PR only

Ovarian 2	
Thames Valley CN	DH Media / PR and network led community engagement
Ovarian 3	
Yorkshire Cancer Network	DH Media / PR and network led community engagement
North East Yorkshire and Humber Clinical alliance	DH Media / PR and network led community engagement
CONSTELLATION (Jan – mid-March 2013) - NO TV	
Constellation of symptoms 1	
North East London	DH Media / PR only
North Central London	DH Media / PR only
Constellation of symptoms 2	
Lancs and South Cumbria	DH Media / PR and network led community engagement
Greater Manchester and Cheshire	DH Media / PR and network led community engagement
Constellation of symptoms 3	
Central South Coast	DH Media / PR and network led community engagement
REGIONAL CAMPAIGNS	
Regional Breast 70+ (Jan – mid-March 2013)	
3 Counties (lead)	DH Media / PR only
Arden (lead)	DH Media / PR only
Pan Birmingham	DH Media / PR only

Greater Midlands	DH Media / PR only
North Trent	DH Media / PR only
Regional Blood in Urine - Kidney & Bladder (Jan – mid-March 2013) – TV	
North of England	DH Media / PR only

Notes

1. DH Media/PR will comprise paid for advertising. Cancer Networks will host these campaigns.
2. In addition to the ovarian campaigns listed, we are exploring running a community engagement only campaign to test the effectiveness of this approach in one Cancer Network.