

Exploring peoples' values and preferences for colorectal cancer screening: a think-aloud study

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Abstract

Introduction:

Understanding peoples' values and preferences around colorectal cancer (CRC) screening, particularly the threshold of benefit at which people choose screening, is important when developing screening recommendations. This study aimed to explore how individuals use numerical information about potential benefits and harms when making decisions about screening, and describe the range of thresholds of absolute risk reduction in CRC incidence and mortality considered sufficient to choose screening.

Method:

Members of the public were recruited via a market research company to participate in think-aloud interviews. During each interview, participants read information about three CRC screening tests (colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, and faecal immunochemical test (FIT)). They were then presented with nine scenarios comparing screening with each of the three tests to no screening, for three levels of baseline 15-year CRC risk (1%, 3% and 5%). The participants were randomised to view the scenarios in one of two formats. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to generate qualitative data for thematic analysis.

Results:

We interviewed twenty people (9(45%) male; mean age 61.7 years; 17(85%) White British; 10(50%) with a history of CRC screening). Preliminary analysis suggests there were mixed views on each test's acceptability based on invasiveness and potential risks involved. In most cases, CRC risk level did not influence willingness to participate in screening.

Discussion:

To our knowledge, this is the first study to assess peoples' decision-making processes regarding the benefits and harms associated with CRC screening at different baseline risk levels.

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

A group of five patient and public representatives (two UK, three USA) are involved in the study. All are passionate to improve uptake and understand preferences for CRC screening. They collectively played an essential role in the overall study design and in specific aspects, including the ethics application and the risk presentation formats displayed on the online survey. Their guidance ensured

that the wording in the online survey is of appropriate literacy level and the risk presentation formats are comprehensible. They will also be involved in the analysis and provide insight into the participant opinions reported during the interviews.