Indicator 13.1 – Percentage of women, aged 53-64, screened for breast cancer

Rationale

This indicator can be used to monitor inequalities in access to breast screening among women aged 53-64. People most at risk of ill health tend to experience the least satisfactory access to the full range of preventive services, including cancer screening programmes. Differences in access are most noticeable amongst socioeconomic groups, although it is likely that additional inequalities are experienced, for example between ethnic groups.¹

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organisation (WHO) evaluated the evidence on breast cancer screening in March 2002. IARC concluded that trials have provided sufficient evidence for the efficacy of mammography screening of women between 50 and 69 years, and that the reduction in mortality from breast cancer among women who chose to participate in screening programmes was estimated to be about 35%.

One-point-three million women in England were screened in 2002/03, and over 8,500 cancers were detected, of which over 40% were small cancers which could not have been detected by hand. Total breast cancer mortality in England & Wales fell by over 21% between 1990 and 1998. A third of this fall is attributed to breast screening.²

Existing indicator sets

This indicator was included in the NHS Priorities and Planning Framework 2003-2006 - Cancer (Target T9) and in the PCT performance indicators but is no longer in any indicator sets.

Numerator definition

Number of women aged between 53 and 64 screened. This indicator measures the ‘coverage’ of the screening programme, so the numerator measures the number of resident women who have had a test with a recorded result at least once in the previous three years.

Definition

This indicator measures the coverage of the screening programme. For the years of data available, this is the proportion of women aged between 53 and 64 who are resident (excluding those ineligible e.g. those who have had a bilateral mastectomy) who have had a test with a recorded result at least once in the previous 3 years.
Source of indicator
The Health and Social Care Information Centre.

Source of numerator
KC63, annual breast screening return for local authorities.

Denominator definition
Eligible population: Number of resident women aged between 53 and 64, excluding those ineligible. Women who are ineligible are recorded on the KC63 form as either ‘recall suspended’ or ‘recall ceased’, meaning they will not receive an invitation for screening. This can be for a number of reasons, including women who have had a bilateral mastectomy, and women who are terminally ill, for whom a breast screening invitation would not result in any benefit. Women who make an informed choice that they no longer wish to be invited for breast screening will also be classed as ineligible.

Source of denominator
KC63 annual breast screening return for local authorities.

Geographic coverage
The data for this indicator are available at PCT level until 2012/13 and LA from 2013/14 onwards, the data are also available for England as a whole.

Other dimensions of inequality
No other dimensions of inequality are recorded for this indicator.

Timeliness
Annual bulletins are published by the Department of Health using information from the KC62 (where screening units report the process and outcomes of the call and recall system); and KC63 (where Local Authorities report the population coverage of the programme) returns. The first summary of the information was in 1988/89. Data for the previous financial year ending 31st March are collected in October/November in order to allow for women’s subsequent procedures and diagnosis to be fully updated and recorded, and are published in February of the following year.
Accuracy and completeness

KC63 returns were received for all of the Local Authorities (LAs)

A woman will only be counted once, regardless of how many screening episodes she has within the period.

Disclosure

There are no disclosure issues with this dataset.

Further information

The breast screening programme previously routinely covered women aged 50 to 64 years; however, from December 2004 the programme was extended to include women up to the age of 70. Prior to this time, women aged 65 and over were screened on request. The data also include some women aged between 45 and 49 years. The vast majority of these are women aged 49 who have been called for their first routine screening a few months early, but some are participating in the trial for screening women under 50.

Data for the extended screening programme including women aged 53 to 70 years have not been published yet.

This indicator includes women aged between 53 and 64 years. This is the best measure of coverage because women may be called for the first time anytime between their 50th and 53rd birthdays.

Statistical bulletins for breast cancer screening are available from the Health and Social Care Information Centre website.

More information on NHS cancer screening programmes is available from the Health and Social Care Information Centre website.

More information on the KC63 data collection is available from the Health and Social Care Information Centre website.

Further information


Health and Social Care Information Centre

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