



## QI Month 2024

# Cornwall Bowel Cancer Screening Age Extension

Bowel Cancer Screening Team, Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust

### What highlighted the improvement opportunity?

Bowel cancer screening aims to both prevent cancer and diagnose cancer earlier. The risk of developing bowel cancer increases once you reach 50. When bowel cancer screening first started, we offered it to those aged 60-69, this was then extended up to those aged 74. Over the past 4 years we have reduced down from 60 to 54 and we are delighted to say from July 2024 we are inviting 50 and 52 year olds. This is fantastic for the Cornish people as we are one of the first in the country who have extended to this age group. Everywhere else will follow suit over the next couple of years but we are delighted for the people of Cornwall that we are in a position to do this now.

### What did you do to implement the change/improvement?

It has taken a lot of planning! We have had to recruit additional staff to make sure our screening patients still receive the attention and quality of service they need; we have also worked closely with the endoscopy team to make sure that we have the space we need to deliver the extra colonoscopies we will be providing.

Review of the eligible population, the expected uptake and positivity rate to enable accurate demand and capacity planning for clinics and colon lists. Ensuring that all staffing were in place to deal with the expected increase in demand, this included specialist screening practitioners and administration. We also had to ensure that we had enough accredited screening colonoscopists in place, this involved advanced training for some of the endoscopists.

We started this process in 2021 and have been able to reduce the commencement of bowel cancer screening from 60 years down to 50 years old. We were required to prove we were meeting our Quality Assurance standards for our original cohort of patients and had a plan to achieve this for age extension.

### What did you want to achieve?

It means that we will be able to help prevent bowel cancer developing and diagnose it earlier. Bowel Cancer is more common in people over the age of 50, so this will make a huge difference to the outcomes for our local population. Over the longer term this should also reduce the number of surgical interventions and non invasive treatments i.e chemotherapy.

### How will/did you know that there has been an improvement?

Prior to lowering the age of our screening group, we removed approx. 900 polyps per year and found 500 cancers over a 12 year period. Since 2021 and age extension has started we are removing approx. 2,270 polyps per year and have found 269 cancers over a 3.5 year period. We are monitoring the uptake of the screening test per age group, the abnormal test results, number of polyps removed as these can turn into cancer, those diagnosed with cancer and the pathological staging at diagnosis. We hope to see a reduction in cancer being diagnosed and when it is diagnosed it is at an earlier stage in the 50 to 59 year olds as well as in our original cohort of patients.

### Have you had any feedback?

- "Thank you so much for this screening program, I am still without symptoms and re cancer that was found early being removed tomorrow. You have probably saved my life. What a brilliant thing you all do"
- "The National Bowel Cancer Screening programme works well. Detected a polyp - cancer cells which I would not of known about without the sample sent in the post. All care and information very good"
- "The whole process was Exemplary, from re - point of sending off the test to Colonoscopy , then results biopsy was 3 weeks total. So efficient, reassuring, respectful,. I was seen at Penzance Hospital. Thank You NHS."
- "Although understandably apprehensive about the results, in the end I am grateful this procedure took place. The initial phone appointment was helpful, informative and answered all my questions. Overall, every member of staff was considerate, explained every step of the procedure including the risks and explained the results, including the lady who rang with the lab results. Thank you to all concerned."

