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Internet home page:  
<http://www.rcgp.org.uk>

Published by The Royal College of  
General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate,  
London SW7 1PU.  
Printed in Great Britain by  
Hillprint Ltd, Bishop Auckland,  
Co Durham DL14 6JQ.

## Research papers this month

### A randomized trial of three marketing strategies to disseminate a screening and brief alcohol intervention programme to GPs

Health research findings are of little benefit to patients if they do not reach the audience they are intended to influence. In this study by Lock *et al*, the aim was to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different marketing strategies for the dissemination of a screening and brief alcohol intervention (SBI) programme to GPs. The three marketing strategies used were postal marketing, telemarketing, and personal marketing. The results show that telemarketing appeared to be the most cost-effective strategy for dissemination of SBI to GPs.

### A RCT of three training and support strategies to encourage implementation of screening and brief alcohol intervention by GPs

Kaner *et al* note that providing doctors with new research findings or clinical guidelines is rarely sufficient to promote changes in clinical practice. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different training and support strategies in promoting the implementation of screening and brief alcohol intervention (SBI) by GPs. The GPs were stratified by marketing conditions, as described in the previous study by Lock *et al*, and allocated to three intensities of training and support. The authors conclude that practice-based training plus telephone support was the most effective and cost-effective strategy to encourage the implementation of SBI by GPs.

### Comparison of breast cancer patient satisfaction with follow-up in primary care versus specialist care

The aims of the follow-up of breast cancer patients, during the disease-free period, are to detect breast cancer recurrence and to provide psychosocial support to the patient; however, little is known about patients' views of follow-up. In this study, Grunfeld *et al* assessed the effect on patient satisfaction of transferring primary responsibility of follow-up for women with breast cancer in remission from hospital outpatient clinics to general practice. The results show that patients were more satisfied with follow-up in general practice.

### The patient-centredness of consultations and outcome in primary care

Kinnersley *et al* note that there is general support for GPs using patient-centred styles. In this study the authors audiotaped consulting sessions to explore whether, for patients presenting for new episodes of care, the GP's consulting style, specifically the patient-centredness of the consultation, is related to five generic outcomes: doctor-patient agreement, patient satisfaction, resolution of symptoms, resolution of concerns, and functional health status. The results show that patient-centred styles of consulting produce benefits in terms of increased patient satisfaction.

### Pharmacist intervention in general practice: the effect on prescribing costs

In 1993/4, Doncaster Health Authority had the highest general practice prescribing costs per patient of all the authorities in the country. As a result, Doncaster Health Authority invested in a scheme whereby pharmacists would work in practices and support GPs' prescribing activities. This study by Rodgers *et al* reports on the results of this controlled trial of pharmacist intervention in general practice. The aim of the study was to determine whether intervention practices made savings compared with control practices. The authors conclude that the use of pharmacists did control prescribing expenditure sufficiently to offset their employment costs.

### Management of deliberate self-harm in general practice: a qualitative study

Prasad *et al* note that the incidence of deliberate self harm (DSH) is estimated to be at least 10 times that of suicide. To assess GPs' views on, and educational requirements for, managing patients following an episode of DSH, the authors carried out a qualitative study with GPs from two London boroughs. Most GPs felt that such patients should be assessed by a psychiatrist and expressed a preference for working with a community psychiatric nurse rather than a counsellor. The authors conclude that improved working relationships between GPs and community mental health teams are necessary.

### Home blood pressure monitoring: its effect on the management of hypertension

Ambulatory and home blood pressure monitoring have been shown to improve the management

© *British Journal of General Practice*, 1999, **49**, 689-694.

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