

Exploring views on bowel, breast and cervical cancer screening

Our research question:

Just over 7 out of 10 women in Scotland participate in breast (72%) and cervical screening (71%), but only 6 out of 10 women (64%) participate in bowel screening. **We wanted to know what we can learn from breast and cervical screening to improve bowel screening participation rates.**

Study participants and interviews:

We sent study invitations to women aged 50 to 64 years and living within the area of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. We interviewed 60 women aged 52 to 64 years, including women who had participated in cancer screening and those who had not. The interviews lasted 43 minutes on average, some were longer than 1 hour.

Findings:

Most women thought that screening was worthwhile, but they also told us that cervical screening was embarrassing, breast screening was painful, and bowel screening was disgusting.

A few women who had not done any screening thought screening was not worthwhile. Others told us they tended to ignore screening invitations.

Women who had not done bowel screening thought bowel cancer was more upsetting and more difficult to treat than breast or cervical cancer, and told us they would rather not know if they had bowel cancer.

Women who had not done bowel screening found this test easier to put off or forget about, and more difficult to do than breast or cervical screening. They disliked doing the test at home without the support of a health professional, having to collect their poo and having to store the test in the house until they could post it.

Women who had done bowel screening also talked about difficulties with doing screening, but explained that planning how to do the test made it easier for them to do.

What's next?

In the future we wish to study how we can support people who want to do bowel screening. For example:

- We want to find out if we can make bowel screening easier by helping people organise and plan how to do the test.



For further questions about this report, please contact:

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