

The PAndemic INfluenza Triage in the Emergency Department (PAINTED) pilot cohort study

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Declared competing interests of authors: Steve Goodacre is deputy chairperson of the Health Technology Assessment Programme Clinical Evaluation and Trials Board, and was chairperson of the Pandemic Influenza Themed Call Board.

Published January 2015

DOI: 10.3310/hta19030

Plain English summary

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Health Technology Assessment 2015; Vol. 19: No. 3

DOI: 10.3310/hta19030

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An influenza pandemic occurs when influenza spreads rapidly across a large population. If this happens, there will be a big increase in the number of patients attending hospital emergency departments. Triage is the process of quickly and accurately identifying patients at high risk of serious illness who need urgent hospital treatment. Triage methods need to be developed and tested in a pandemic to ensure that they are accurate.

The PAINTED (PAndemic INfluenza Triage in the Emergency Department) study is planned to be activated if a pandemic occurs. We tested the PAINTED study research methods by developing a standardised clinical assessment form that could both collect research data and be used as regular clinical notes, and then tested use of the form in patients with seasonal influenza across six hospitals. We also interviewed 12 doctors and nurses to find out what they thought of the form.

We used the standardised form to collect data from 155 patients with suspected influenza during winter 2012–13. We were able to collect and analyse data, but some data were missing and this could cause problems in a pandemic study. Staff views on the form were generally positive, indicating that they found it acceptable and usable.

Over 40 hospitals across the UK have now been signed up to take part in the PAINTED study, and regulatory approvals have been secured to allow the study to start if, or when, an influenza pandemic occurs.

ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)

ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)

Impact factor: 5.116

Health Technology Assessment is indexed in MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, The Cochrane Library and the ISI Science Citation Index and is assessed for inclusion in the Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects.

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the Health Technology Assessment programme as project number 11/46/07. The contractual start date was in August 2012. The report detailing the set up phase and initial outcomes began editorial review in October 2014 and was accepted for publication in December 2014. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The Health Technology Assessment editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report. Should the study progress further, the full report will be published in the *Health Technology Assessment* journal.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health.

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