

The design of a survey questionnaire to measure perceptions and behaviour during an influenza pandemic: the Flu TELEphone Survey Template (FluTEST)

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published November 2014

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02410

Plain English summary

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Health Services and Delivery Research 2014; Vol. 2: No. 41

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02410

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain English summary

During the 2009–10 influenza (flu) pandemic, telephone surveys were used to assess how people were reacting to the threat. These often left room for improvement. To improve surveys in a future pandemic we (1) identified what questions should be asked about behaviour, perceptions and flu-like symptoms; (2) checked that these questions were easy to understand; (3) checked whether people gave consistent answers to questions when asked a week apart; and (4) tested whether people who dropped out of a two-stage survey were different to people who did not.

We identified what questions to ask by consulting the scientific literature and talking to experts. After producing a set of possible questions, we checked their wording in 78 interviews with members of the public. We used a telephone survey of 1080 adults from Great Britain, and a follow-up survey 1–2 weeks later, to assess the consistency of answers and the differences between those who did and did not complete the second survey. These surveys used a subset of the questions we generated.

We produced a long list of 208 questions. Our interviews identified multiple issues with these, most of which we resolved. People generally gave consistent answers over time. People who did not respond to our second survey tended to be younger and less well educated than those who did, and differed on several flu-related variables.

Our items cover the key areas that should be measured in the next pandemic and can be used as soon as a pandemic begins.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the Health Services and Delivery Research programme as project number 11/46/21. The contractual start date was in August 2012. The report detailing the set up phase and initial outcomes began editorial review in July 2014 and was accepted for publication in October 2014. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The *Health Services and Delivery Research* 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 Services and Delivery Research* 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 HS&DR 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 HS&DR programme or the Department of Health.

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