

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

G James Rubin,^{1*} Savita Bakhshi,² Richard Amlôt,³ Nicola Fear,¹ Henry WW Potts⁴ and Susan Michie⁵

¹Weston Education Centre, Department of Psychological Medicine, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, London, UK

²Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, King's College London, London, UK

³Emergency Response Department, Public Health England, Salisbury, UK

⁴Centre for Health Informatics and Multiprofessional Education, UCL Institute of Health Informatics, University College London, London, UK

⁵Division of Psychology and Language Sciences, University College London, London, UK

*Corresponding author

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Plain English summary

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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.

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Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk

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