

# CHOICE: Choosing Health Options In Chronic Care Emergencies

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**Declared competing interests of authors:** Simon de Lusignan has received funding from Eli Lilly and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Biologicals. Funding has also been received from the Department of Health for the National Evaluation of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). Elspeth Guthrie reports grants from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) during the conduct of the study. Karina Lovell reports grants from NIHR, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Arthritis Research UK during the conduct of the study. Chris Dickens reports grants from NIHR during the conduct of the study. Linda Davies reports grants from the NIHR, Medical Research Council, Economic and Social Research Council, Macmillan, Cancer Research UK, Arthritis Research UK and Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (CMFT) during the conduct of this study. Peter Salmon reports grants from Marie Curie Cancer Care, the Liverpool Institute of Health Inequalities Research, MerseyCare NHS Trust, Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen Hospitals NHS Trust, the Economic and Social Research Council, and the Medical Research Council during the conduct of the study. Navneet Kapur reports other research funding from NIHR, the Department of Health and the Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership during the conduct of the study. He was not in receipt of any industry funding. He was involved in National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines and Department of Health (England) advisory groups on suicidal behaviour unrelated to the conduct of the current study.

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Published July 2017

DOI: 10.3310/pgfar05130

## Plain English summary

### Choosing Health Options In Chronic Care Emergencies

Programme Grants for Applied Research 2017; Vol. 5: No. 13

DOI: 10.3310/pgfar05130

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## Plain English summary

In this programme, we sought to understand whether or not psychological factors impacted on use of emergency health services by people with chronic physical illness, and to develop an intervention that may improve their health and reduce the need to use emergency services. We carried out scientific reviews, a large primary care study, in-depth interviews with patients and a small treatment trial.

We found that prior use of emergency health care, depression, life stressors and lack of a partner had significant impacts on use of emergency services in people with long-term physical illness. We also found that people sought help only when they really needed it and saw hospitals as being the right place to receive expert care.

We found that depression and the other psychological and social factors were rarely recognised by general practitioners (GPs) or discussed in annual health reviews. We worked with GP practices to try to improve their management of people who were likely to need emergency services, and we also worked with people with lived experience of chronic disease to develop a specific psychological treatment for people with long-term physical illness who were depressed or experiencing social difficulties.

It was difficult to get GP practices to change, but the psychological intervention, which involved weekly treatment sessions from a practice-based, liaison mental health worker, was very well received. There was preliminary evidence that recipients became less depressed and had less need to attend emergency departments, but there was no overall effect from the efforts to improve practice management.



# Programme Grants for Applied Research

ISSN 2050-4322 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4330 (Online)

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## This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by PGfAR as project number RP-PG-0707-10162. The contractual start date was in December 2013. The final report began editorial review in May 2015 and was accepted for publication in September 2016. As the funder, the PGfAR programme agreed the research questions and study designs in advance with the investigators. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PGfAR 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.

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