

# Identifying exceptional cystic fibrosis care services: combining statistical process control with focus groups

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**Declared competing interests of authors:** Caroline Elston reports personal fees from Chiesi Farmaceutici S.p.A. (Parma, Italy) advisory board and Raptor Pharmaceuticals (Novato, CA, USA) advisory board, outside the submitted work. Martin Wildman reports funding from Philips [(Amsterdam, the Netherlands) for research to create posters encouraging adherence to preventative inhaled therapies in cystic fibrosis (CF) and for support to Sheffield University to fund statistician time for data analysis about nebuliser use in relation to exacerbations and spirometry devices and weighing scales to understand home monitoring in CF]; travel expenses from Pari Pharma GmbH (Starnberg, Germany) to attend Pari in Munich to discuss the CFHealthHub programme; speaker fees and travel expenses from Vertex Pharmaceuticals (Boston, MA, USA) to deliver talks; funding from Smiths Medical (Minneapolis, MN, USA) to support the development of a chipped Acapella device; grants from the Burdett Trust for Nursing; grants from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Programme Grants for Applied Research (PGfAR) programme; and funding from NHS England to support a programme to develop interventions to encourage self-management in people with CF from NHS England, outside the submitted work. In addition, Martin Wildman has a patent pending for Chipped Acapella. Siobhán B Carr reports personal fees (advisory board, steering committee and lecture) to her institution from Vertex Pharmaceuticals, advisory board fees from Chiesi Farmaceutici S.p.A. and speaker fees from Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. (Petah Tikva, Israel), outside the submitted work.

Published February 2019

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr07060

## Plain English summary

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Health Services and Delivery Research 2019; Vol. 7: No. 6

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr07060

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## Plain English summary

Cystic fibrosis (CF) affects approximately 9000 people in the UK. People with CF are treated at specialist centres; the national CF Registry contains data on patients attending these centres. Until 2015, annual reports based on these data included comparisons between centres using rankings. These comparisons, however, do not tell us whether or not the differences between the 'best'- and 'worst'-performing centres are clinically or statistically meaningful. We explored whether or not adopting a different approach, based on statistical modelling that accounted for important patient characteristics (such as sex, CF disease severity and socioeconomic deprivation), and displaying the results in easy-to-interpret graphs, may identify exceptional CF centres. Outcomes will never be the same everywhere and, owing to the size of centre, variability is expected. Our approach helps to identify differences that are within the scope of what would be expected and differences that are exceptional.

We used data from patients who were attending adult and paediatric CF centres. We focused on predicted lung function, studying it in different age groups, using different reference equations and considering single-year measures as well as changes over time. It was found that in some centres, both adult and paediatric, lung function results were repeatedly statistically meaningfully different from the overall average – either better or worse. Some differences were explained by patient characteristics. In other cases, the results indicate an association of lung function with the use of intravenous antibiotics, although the evidence is mixed and needs further exploration.

We spoke to clinicians and patients to understand what they perceived to be important for good CF care. Clinicians highlighted, among other things, the importance of leadership, education, monitoring and treatment policies. From these factors, we developed questionnaires for all patients and clinicians. Response rates to the clinician questionnaire were poor and we did not have sufficient time to disseminate the patient questionnaire, although we still plan to do so. Future work is needed to link how care is delivered with our centre comparisons, to understand how differences in outcomes arise.



# Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 12/5001/43. The contractual start date was in June 2013. The final report began editorial review in February 2017 and was accepted for publication in January 2018. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR 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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