Primary care management of cardiovascular risk for people with severe mental illnesses: the Primrose research programme including cluster RCT

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Declared competing interests of authors: Thomas Craig reports personal fees from Otsuka Pharmaceuticals Europe Ltd, Wexham, UK. Richard Holt reports personal fees from Eli Lilly and Company (IN, USA), Jannsen Pharmaceutica (Beerse, Belgium), Sunovion, Pharmaceuticals Inc. (MA, USA) and Otsuka Pharmaceuticals Europe Ltd and is a member of the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Women and Children’s Health Panel. Thomas Barnes reports personal fees from Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc., Newron Pharmaceuticals SpA (Bresso, Italy), and Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd (Tokyo, Japan) and Lundbeck, Copenhagen, Denmark Kate Walters was a member of the Disease Prevention Panel and the Primary Care Commissioning Panel. Susan Michie was a member of the HTA Pandemic Influenza Board. Michael King was a member of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)-funded Clinical Trials Units (CTUs), Rapid Trials and Add-on Studies Board. Irwin Nazareth’s membership includes CTUs funded by NIHR, the Disease Prevention Panel, HTA Commissioning Board, HTA Commissioning Sub-board (Expression of Interest) and the HTA Primary Care Themed Call. Rumana Omar was a member of the HTA General Board. Steve Morris sat as a member on the Health Services and Delivery Research (HSDR) board, HSDR Commissioning Board, HSDR Evidence Synthesis Sub-board, HTA Commissioning Board and Public Health Research Research Funding Board.

Published April 2019
DOI: 10.3310/pgfar07020

Plain English summary

Primrose research programme including cluster RCT
Programme Grants for Applied Research 2019; Vol. 7: No. 2
DOI: 10.3310/pgfar07020

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People with severe mental illnesses (SMI), including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, die earlier from heart attacks and strokes. This programme of work explored how to best prevent heart attacks or stroke in people with SMI.

First, a new computerised tool for general practitioner (GP) practices was developed to predict heart attacks for people with SMI. This was then compared with existing computerised tools and it was found that this new tool was better. Second, staff and patients were asked for their views on what a service for reducing the risk of heart attacks should look like. Existing research was reviewed and national data were used to look at statin prescribing (a medication for lowering levels of cholesterol) for people with SMI. It was found that statins decreased levels of cholesterol, that physical activity and diet lowered weight, and that accessing Stop Smoking Services and medications reduced smoking.

This evidence was used to develop a new service to lower levels of cholesterol in people with SMI. Patient experts were involved in decisions of what to include in the service and in training nurses to review medication, diet, physical activity, smoking, blood pressure or diabetes mellitus in 8–12 appointments at GP practices.

Third, whether or not patients had lower levels of cholesterol after receiving the new service at their GP practice when compared with patients receiving GP usual care was assessed. The first large trial was delivered to improve physical health in SMI in general practices. A total of 327 patients took part in 76 general practices: 38 practices had the new service and 38 did not. The service was delivered well and people attended. Levels of cholesterol went down for both those who did and those who did not receive the new service. There was no difference between the groups in terms of levels of cholesterol or other physical measures. The care provided by the general practices that did not receive the new Primrose service may have been better than normal general practice care. These general practices still had to identify people with raised CVD risk factors to take part in the study who might not have been identified if the general practice had not taken part in the study. This may explain why no differences were found. People who received the new service had fewer inpatient mental health admissions over the year.
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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by PGfAR as project number RP-PG-0609-10156. The contractual start date was in March 2011. The final report began editorial review in September 2017 and was accepted for publication in August 2018. 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.

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, CCF, NETSCC, the PGfAR or the Department of Health and Social Care. 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 PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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