

Developing an intervention around referral and admissions to intensive care: a mixed-methods study

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

When a person suddenly becomes very unwell, they rely on doctors to decide what treatment is best for them. One decision that doctors make is whether or not the person should have treatment in an intensive care unit. This project was designed to understand and improve the way doctors make decisions about admission to the intensive care unit. The project had five stages:

1. First, we carried out a review of the previous research about these decisions, and the experiences of the people involved.
2. We then studied how decisions are currently made. A researcher watched how doctors make these decisions in six different hospitals and interviewed the people involved.
3. We used what we had learnt to run a type of survey called a choice experiment to see which factors are most important in making these decisions.
4. We used all that we had learnt from the first three stages to develop a tool that would help doctors to make these decisions. We showed this tool to people from organisations representing patients and doctors, and asked their opinion. We used their feedback to improve the tool. We then used the tool in three hospitals to see whether or not doctors would be able to use it.
5. We developed a way of checking the standard of decision-making so that we would be able to tell whether or not our tool worked.

In this project we have gained a lot of new information about how doctors make decisions about admission to the intensive care unit. We found that decision-making is currently not very clear, and that patients and families are often not involved in making the decision. We have also developed a tool to improve how these decisions are made. This tool could be an important way to make sure that the decisions made about patients are clear and fair for everyone.

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