C-reactive protein point-of-care testing for safely reducing antibiotics for acute exacerbations of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: the PACE RCT

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Declared competing interests of authors: Christopher C Butler reports that Afinion C-reactive protein devices and associated training given to participating general practices were provided by Alere Inc. (now Abbott Diagnostics, IL, USA) at no cost to the study. He has received fees for participating in a Roche Molecular Systems Advisory Board meeting on 4 and 5 February 2016 about point-of-care testing; held an investigator-initiated grant from Roche Molecular Diagnostics (Roche Molecular Systems Inc., CA, USA) to evaluate the analytic performance of the cobas® Liat® point-of-care device for detecting influenza using samples from a separately funded study; and is part of a publicly funded research consortia that includes industrial partners. He was a member of the Medical Research Council–National Institute for Health Research (MRC–NIHR) Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Board (2012–16). He has been a NIHR Senior Investigator since 2016. Kerenza Hood was a member of the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme Funding Boards Policy Group (formerly Clinical Studies Group) (2016 to present), the HTA General Board (2016 to present) and the NIHR Clinical Trials Unit Standing Advisory Committee (2014 to 2019). Gurudutt Naik reports non-financial support from Alere Inc. Carl Llor reports grants from the European Commission (Seventh Framework Programme and Horizon 2020), the Catalan Society of Family Medicine, Abbott Diagnostics and Instituto de Salud Carlos III (Spanish Ministry of Health) outside the submitted work. Rhiannon Phillips reports that her current post is a fellowship funded by Health and Care Research Wales as part of the Primary and Emergency Care Research Centre Wales research centre grant.
Plain English summary

People with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) often experience flare-ups known as acute exacerbations of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Antibiotics are prescribed for most flare-ups, but they do not always benefit patients and may cause harm, such as side effects or subsequent infections that are resistant.

Rapid point-of-care tests (POCTs) can be used to help determine when antibiotics are more likely to be needed. C-reactive protein (CRP) is a marker of inflammation that can be measured with a POCT. Patients with flare-ups and a low CRP value are less likely to benefit from antibiotics. The PACE trial asked whether or not measuring CRP with a POCT could lead to fewer antibiotics being consumed for flare-ups, without having negative effects for patients.

We aimed to recruit 650 patients with a COPD flare-up from primary care. Patients were randomly assigned to either (1) usual care with the addition of a CRP POCT, or (2) usual care without the addition of the test. Antibiotic use over the first 4 weeks and patients’ self-assessment of their health 2 weeks after enrolment were measured in both groups.

Patients in the CRP test group used fewer antibiotics than those managed as usual, and had improved patient-reported outcomes. Costs were a little higher in the CRP POCT group. Interviews with patients and clinicians found that they appreciated the CRP test being included in the decision-making process.
Health Technology Assessment

ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)
ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)
Impact factor: 3.819

Health Technology Assessment is indexed in MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, The Cochrane Library and the Clarivate Analytics Science Citation Index.

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 12/33/12. The contractual start date was in July 2014. The draft report began editorial review in March 2018 and was accepted for publication in August 2018. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft 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, NETSCC, the HTA programme 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 HTA programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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