

Using the Recommended Summary Plan for Emergency Care and Treatment in Primary Care: a mixed methods study

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

The recommended summary plan for emergency care and treatment, or ReSPECT, may help healthcare professionals to make decisions about emergency treatments when patients are too sick to speak for themselves.

What did we want to find out?

How, when and why ReSPECT plans are made and used outside hospital and how they affect patient care.

How did we do this?

We listened to general practitioners, patients and their families, and examined ReSPECT plans in patient records. We listened to staff in care homes, homecare workers and other healthcare professionals. We surveyed general practitioners and the public. We worked with people with a learning disability to find out what support they needed to complete a ReSPECT plan.

What did we find out?

People thought that ReSPECT plans could be a good way to record a person's wishes about medical treatment. They thought that the plan should be made with a healthcare professional they knew and trusted. These conversations need time and preparation, especially for someone with a learning disability. Most people thought family involvement was important. General practitioners told us that it could be difficult to know what kind of emergencies and treatments to discuss and put in the plan.

Most plans we looked at had recommendations about cardiopulmonary resuscitation and many plans had recommendations about other treatments. About half of plans recorded the patient's wishes. It was not always clear who the plan had been discussed with to find out their wishes.

Care home staff told us that they were often frustrated when healthcare professionals in an emergency did not always follow the plan.

What does this mean?

Further research is needed on how to improve ReSPECT conversations so that plans clearly reflect what is important to the individual, and how to help health professionals use ReSPECT when an emergency happens.

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