

Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) For Low Risk Patients

March 2018 News Bulletin

This is a new bulletin for FIT stakeholders. This test was included in the 'suspected' pathway for colorectal cancer and is for those patients who do not currently meet the criteria for a 2WW referral. These patients are classed as low risk, but not no risk. The rationale for providing this test is that if any of these patients have cancer then it is more likely to be picked up at an early stage and in those patients who do not have cancer it means that they may not need to undergo a colonoscopy, thus reducing the demand on endoscopy services.

National Context

Professor Chris Harrison (National Clinical Director for Cancer, NHS England) says:

“There is considerable interest in the possible use of FIT tests in high risk symptomatic patients as a way of identifying avoidable colonoscopy or CT colonography. The evidence base for this is not yet fully established.

A national pilot programme is in progress with sites in UCLH, Croydon and RM Partnership, Nottingham, Leicester, York and Liverpool. In addition an NIHR funded evaluation of the use of FIT in high risk symptomatic patients is taking place at UCLH and Croydon and RM Partnership. Pending the outcomes of these studies (expected during 2018) Cancer Alliances are advised to prioritise the full implementation of DG30. Where Cancer Alliances wish to pursue the use of FIT testing in high risk symptomatic patients they are advised to do this as part of the national pilot programme or as part of the NIHR study”.

Project Update

Transformation funding for the implementation of FIT was received in September 2017. The project team and Steering Group have been established and following an assurance process, a joint submission from Exeter Clinical Laboratory and North Bristol Severn Pathology has been accepted to provide laboratory services for the project. The providers are now acquiring equipment and developing a plan to achieve implementation within the anticipated time frame (i.e. test delivery from June 2018).

Over the coming quarter the project team will seek to develop: implementation protocols; GP educational toolkits and advice and guidance protocols; Production of patient information; and, the delivery of the primary care & stakeholder engagement programme

Devon and Cornwall Audit

14 practices in Devon were recruited to this audit. 217 patients were identified as eligible for this test during the 3 months that the audit ran. This gives a mean rate of 14/1000 patients per year per practice. A significant number of these patients were referred into secondary care: 48% on a 2WW pathway and 21% routine referral. This audit is now being repeated in Cornwall and will conclude in June 2018.