

Learning Disabilities' Nurses Experiences Recommending Cancer Screening To Patients with Learning Disabilities



Genevieve Breau, Peter Woodward, Nicki Fowler
University of Greenwich, London, UK



Cancer Screening in People with Learning Disabilities

- Recently in the UK, older women with learning disabilities were less likely to have a mammogram (breast cancer screening x-ray) than other women.
- Older people (both men and women) with learning disabilities were less likely to have a bowel cancer screening test than other older people.

Learning Disabilities Nurses

- Learning Disabilities Nurses help people with learning disabilities access healthcare from doctors and other health professionals.
- Usually nurses who focus on learning disabilities only work in the UK and Ireland.
- Learning disabilities nurses can help people with learning disabilities get screened for breast, cervical, and bowel cancer.

Why I did the study

- I already found out that in Canada, general practitioners (GPs) can help people with learning disabilities get cancer screening.
- However, in the UK, I wasn't sure how learning disabilities nurses can help people with learning disabilities get cancer screening.

What I wanted to know:

- What are learning disabilities nurses' experiences helping people with learning disabilities get breast, cervical, and bowel cancer screening.
- By understanding how nurses help people with learning disabilities get cancer screening, I can suggest ways for nurses to help more people to get screened.

What I did in the study

- My colleague (Peter Woodward) conducted 11 interviews with learning disabilities nurses across the UK.
- Some nurses worked in cities, others worked in rural areas.
- The interviews were recorded, and I transcribed them (wrote down what everyone said).
- I am still studying the interview transcripts, but next I will share some of what I learned.

Early Findings

- Nurses provide reasonable adjustments to help people with learning disabilities get cancer screening tests.
 - Nurses provide social support
 - Nurses provide advance appointments so people can visit where the screening takes place
 - Nurses provide easy-read information.
 - Nurses help if someone needs a follow-up appointment

What one nurse said about helping people get cancer screening

“So I am work both with the screening service. I work with patients, carers, um homes, nursing homes, hospitals, other agencies, um just to basically support people with a learning disability so they understand that they have access to screening, that they help them understand what it's all about and to complete it if they so wish to.”



Early Findings

- Nurses help people get cancer screening before they have symptoms.
- Nurses can also help if someone does have symptoms.
- Nurses work together with other health professionals to help people get screened.
- Nurses might give training to other health professionals so they can learn how to help people with learning disabilities get screened.

Another Nurse Talked about working with staff at the GP surgery:

“Breast screening, take breast screening. ...you probably already know, but the the GP surgeries have got a disability register. ...They'll look at that register, cross refer it with who's eligible for the screening. Give that to the program manager. The program manager then will let us know who's on there. Then we can contact those patients and see if they need any help with the screening. So it might be that they went before, but something's happened and they, you know, they can't get there, manage the steps or something. So we can just pass any information we can pick up. ”



Conclusions (to date)

- Nurses are usually happy to help people with learning disabilities get screened for cancer.
- There are many ways that nurses can help.
- There is a need for more research with people with learning disabilities themselves to explain what their experience with cancer screening is like.



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