

Medical Testing –
Evaluation and Policy

Case Study

Background

The work of the PenTAG and the Exeter Test Group within the College of Medicine and Health has had considerable impact on a range of health policy areas, including Alzheimer's disease. In 2010 PenTAG and Prof Chris Hyde wrote a report about the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of available drugs, which formed the basis for revised NICE guidelines (2011). Following this revision, the group estimated that 110,000 people with untreated mild disease at the time of the report were now being treated.

While at PenTAG Prof Hyde led the work on health technology assessment (HTA) for the NICE technology appraisal programme funded by the Department for Health through the NIHR HTA Programme. This experience has informed the development of a new relationship with Public Health England, instigated by Prof Hyde's membership of PHE's UK National Screening Committee (NSC). As a result of this relationship, Prof Hyde and researchers in the Exeter Test Group have become increasingly involved in work to evaluate medical tests, so supporting and underpinning the NSC's advice to ministers and the NHS.



Key findings

- As new members of the Framework for the support of the Public Health England Screening Programme , the Exeter Test Group have conducted systematic reviews, meta-analyses and evaluations on a number of NSC priority areas.
- This allows PHE to:
 - Perform its functions in an efficient manner
 - Act with greater authority by involving an independent academic group
 - Improve the evidence-base of its guidance
- Project areas have included the effectiveness of public health campaigns on possible cancer symptoms, economic models for prevention of cervical cancer, the reliability of testing devices for diabetes and the role of AI in screening for diabetic eye disease.
- The group have observed that the needs of PHE are very different from the those of NICE (the Exeter Test Group's other close collaborator). This emphasises the importance of investing individually in the relationships with each policy-making body you want to work with.

‘As an academic there can be few more satisfying achievements than supporting a policy-maker base their decisions on good research and help them resist expediency and political whim’ - Prof Chris Hyde

Policy outcomes

- An evaluation of the respiratory Be Clear on Cancer Campaign
- A systematic review of economic models for HPV prevention
- A systematic review of the reliability of HbA1c testing devices
- Improved understanding about whether we should screen for autistic spectrum disorder
- Delivered enhanced knowledge of the role of AI in assisting screening for diabetic retinopathy

We have appreciated the flexibility, responsiveness, clarity and rigour that the Exeter Test Group have brought to the projects we have commissioned from them.

Team

The Exeter Test Group: Zhivko Zhelev; Jaime Peters; Harriet Hunt, Bogdan Grigore, Patrick Bossuyt (visiting Professor); Chun Pang (PhD student); Maria Olsen (visiting PhD student); Julia Chisnell (PH trainee on attachment); Georgina Thompson (medical student on attachment)

Research funding

Research England: Strategic Priorities Fund 2020
(Retrospective funding): Public Health England

Government Areas of Research Interest:

Department of Health: Evidence-based policy making; health technology assessment; medical test evaluation; screening for disease; personalised and stratified medicine





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Get in touch

Send us an email at PolicyEngagement@exeter.ac.uk at any stage of the process for assistance.



Policy at Exeter